Difference-Making: Bai Identity Construction in Dali

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This thesis is the original work of the author

except where otherwise acknowledged in the text.

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For my parents

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Abstract

The Bai are one of the 55 ethnic minority groups (*shaoshu minzu*) officially demarcated in China between the 1950s and 1979. It is difficult to pinpoint 'unique' Bai characteristics, yet the Bai have embraced the state-granted label, acted on it and experienced it emotionally, practically and politically. Unlike studies among other ethnic minorities such as the Yi, Miao, Hui and early English literature about the Bai, this thesis presents an alternative to a hegemonic and unilateral view of Chinese *minzu* by contextualising how the Bai people use the state-granted label to conceptualise Bai identities through historical studies, recent memories, religious practices and an annual social event. I argue that the English language anthropological term 'ethnicity' does not capture the dynamics of *minzu* in China.

The thesis deals with the social-historical layerings of Bai/state, Bai/Han and Bai/Yi relationships, and shows how Bai identities are produced and reproduced in-between these relationships. Most significant among my findings is the role of the legitimate name/term *Baizu*, which fits well into a Chinese context by being politically correct, economically valuable, and socially and historically embedded in local social life. This label has become a symbolic diacritic, which sets the basis for the sustainable reproduction of Bai identities based on features which are not necessarily ethnically distinctive but become so due to the legitimate label. And the Bai have utilise it as a manageable social and political unit for the expression of personal or collective identities under a projected monolithic and homogenous Bai Identity.

This thesis concludes that Bai identity is a new form of group affiliation, new in the sense that the Bai have entered the new world of a clear-cut *Baizu* category, but it is not completely unfamiliar to them. For anthropologists, this requires a new way of rethinking and theorising ethnicity.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

APWHL	*Application Proposal for World Heritage Listing*
BZJZ	Bai Zu Jian Zhi (*A Short Ethnography of the Bai*)
CCP	The Chinese Communist Party
DBAP	Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture
KMT	*Kuomintang* (The Nationalist Party)
NECP	The National Ethnic Classification Project

Baizu	白族, the Bai people
Benzhu	本主, local deity
Jiaoguobe	Literally means Bai from the extended Bai bones. Often refers to those who become Bai by marrying into Bai families by people from Sword County.
Shaobao	Literally means burning the bags, which refers to the burning of incense and paper-money for the deceased, ancestors and spirits
Shouxiao	To observe the required rituals for recently deceased parent or spouse
Gua sa na	Local annual event that has been recorded as 绕山林, 绕三林, 绕三灵, 绕桑林 in Chinese.

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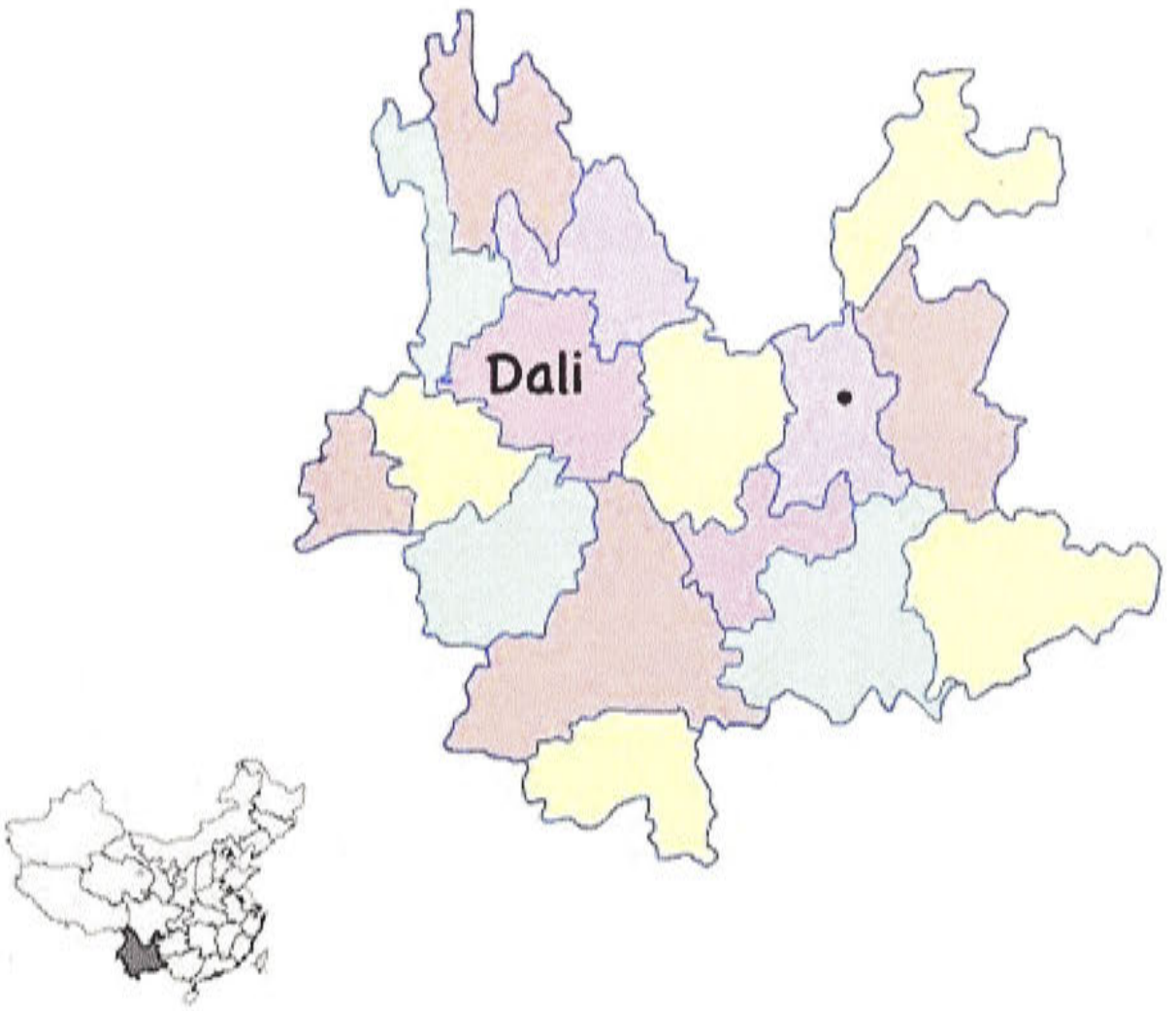

Dali: Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture
- : Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province

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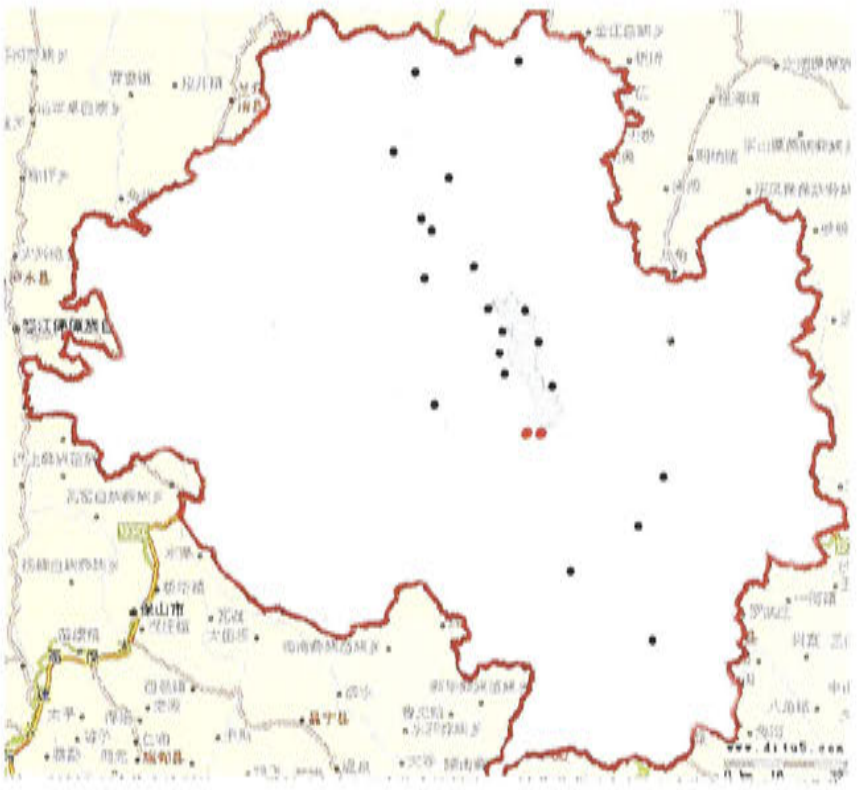
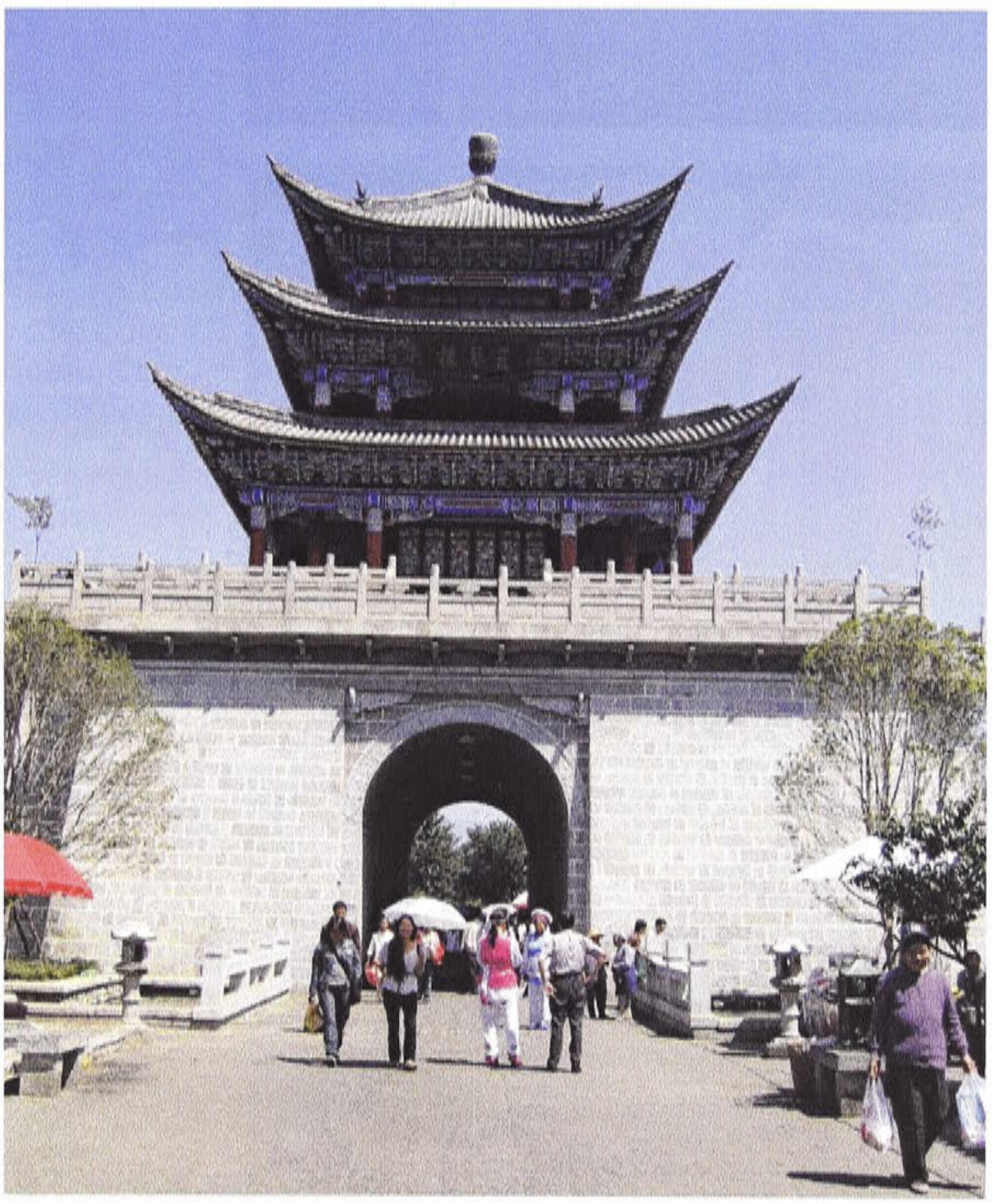


Chapter One

Contextualising the Bai and the Research



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Chapter One

Contextualising the Bai and the Research

This chapter begins with the unfolding of "self-identifying talk" (Marcus 2006) about some of my fieldwork encounters in order to introduce where and how the research topic originates. Then it will move on to introduce the Bai people under study, how the Chinese population got to know of the Bai, how they are represented in the literature, and what the state did with the Bai in the 1950s. The research goals of the thesis and how to attain these goals will be introduced, including frequently appearing terms in this particular context, the methodologies of the thesis, fieldwork sites and a chapter plan.

1.1 Why Bai identity?

The Bai, *Baizu*, are one of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China, 83% of the Bai population live in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP), Yunnan Province, China (see Map 1. p.xv). In 1999, I was interested in the impact of tourism development on local Bai gender roles in the DBAP.[1] I had encountered many rural Bai women in urban Dali who left their husbands and children home in order to earn cash. This questioned the assumed model of social division of labour previously in

[1] See also Morais et al (2005) for recent publication on the same topic in the same locality.

my mind and in many Chinese publications on the 'patriarchal' Bai society.[2] I was curious about the 'newly acquired' gendered social roles brought in by the rapid social economic development after the Open Door Policy in 1978 and was eager to explore this aspect of sociocultural change. After I learned more from and about local people, I realised that tourism was only one of the many causes that had brought about a change in gender roles. The women's strong identification with the Bai group and the way they perceived a distinctive Bai culture captured my attention. I gave up my initial interest in tourism and gender roles and decided to find out why people are still so sensitive to the *minzu* label of official ethnic identity granted by the state half a century ago.

During the writing of the thesis, I kept wrestling with slippery concepts such as ethnicity and ethnic identity, which are actually "fragmented and fractured" in the literature (Hall 1996:4). The vast literature in ethnicity studies has not achieved a clear definition of the concept, and the ambiguity contained in these terms remains unresolved (see Banks 1996: 2-6). Since Leach's study on the Kachin (1954), Barth's classical theorizing on ethnic identity (1969) and Abner Cohen's contextualizing of ethnic identity in local politics (1969a&b, 1974a&b), it seems that there is no anthropological work that has been conducted without dealing with this concept. Ethnicity, often used as a synonym for culture,[3] has become "ubiquitous" in the theoretical inquiry in anthropology (Williams 1989:402; Banks 1996; Herzfeld

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[2] For example BZJZ (1961) and YNSSMZ (1983), including my own pre-mature contribution to Doorne et al (2003).

[3] This chapter will elaborate the term ethnicity later.

2001:12, 32; Blum 2002), especially in debates about cultural colonialism and nationalism in the mid-1990s.

Yet, at the same time, studies on ethnicity seem to have ceased to generate interesting questions or insightful explanations. Moreover, the concept of ethnicity marks more than a shift in research subject; it is an intellectual fortress where anthropologists struggle to survive academically. Theoretical breakthroughs have been scarce. After the 1990s, the anthropological study of ethnicity faded because it seemed to be, theoretically speaking, a fruitless path.

At moments of feeling disillusioned about the utility of the concept, my contacts with local people, both Bai and non-Bai, would screen automatically in my mind. The fact that the Bai are a group with real and recognised social and political voices convinced me that putting Bai identity at the centre of my research is appropriate and still timely in terms of the constantly changing social experiences of the past five decades. Such encounters helped me focus on the study of identity building and kept me on track after numerous frustrations both in the field and in the writing. In the following, I shall present five episodes to portray parts of the 'scene of encounter', which is not to claim ethnographic authority but to illustrate the salience of being Bai in everyday life and why I was attracted to this topic. Bai Identity still matters among those who are, or who are not, classified so.

Before the 2004 Spring Festival on the train to Dali, I was sharing a carriage section with a local family. After I told them that I was going to do more fieldwork among the Bai people, the woman (a 53 year old Han), a construction company clerk, expressed her understanding of my study by stating: "Oh, sure. The Bai people are a

xianjinde (advanced) people." I was quite surprised to hear an ordinary clerk repeat what both Bai and non-Bai scholars have been repeating: that the Bai have been considered a highly advanced group, the most advanced among all the ethnic groups in Yunnan (Ma Changshou 1991[1936]; Ma Yao 1994, 1995, 1998). So I asked her what she meant by 'advanced'. She explained:

> "Well, you know what. When I was small, I often saw Bai women who sold fresh vegetables in the street and who wore make-up. They actually cared a lot how they looked even if they were carrying vegetables on their shoulders. They would always put on some lipstick, powdered their cheeks and shaded their eyebrows. When Bai men came to the ancient town of Dali, they often wore sunglasses [referring to the dark glasses Bai people believe protect the wearer against evil spirits] Nowadays, we modern women all started to do so, we learnt to wear some make-up to make ourselves look nicer but they [Bai women] were actually doing so decades ago."

Limited though this may be, such a vernacular interpretation of Bai people's 'advancedness' illustrates the social aspects of Bai identity. Being Bai does not merely refer to a particular geographic locality as is often the case with Chinese native-place identities; it is a metaphor for being relatively advanced, especially when the Bai have been generally perceived superior to other ethnic groups socially and culturally. And the higher social status of the Bai seems to have been embedded in the minds of ordinary people.

In the street, each time I stepped into the ancient town of Dali,[4] local people would approach me and ask in their lingua franca (Mandarin): "Looking for

[4] Between 1999 and 2005, I went to Dali four times a year and each stay lasted from two weeks to two months.

accommodation? We are Bai people [*yao zhao zhuchu ma? wo men shi baizu ren*]." Or "we have standard rooms in Bai-style houses [*baizu minju*]."

In a university seminar room during the oral examination of a submitted PhD thesis, the two Bai examiners on the panel of five members were very upset with the young Bai PhD candidate in question. They would not pass the candidate because of his conclusion that Bai culture is one of the local representations of *Han* culture unless the candidate changed his conclusion to: Bai culture is one of the local representations of *Chinese* culture. The two Bai examiners insisted that the candidate drew the wrong conclusion, yet the latter thought that they reacted so strongly simply because of their identification with the Bai. This candidate then added in a private conversation with me, "it is not that I do not identify with the Bai, but we have to maintain academic integrity, don't we?" The bottom line of the clash is where to drop the line between the Bai and the Han. Being Bai is an assertion of *minzu* dignity, inviting strong feelings and emotions.

In one village, a Mr. Wang took me to a simple tile-burning pile in the community to show me according to him "the thousand-year old porcelain burning technique of the Bai". He also proudly showed me a shoe-shaped jar which he ordered made as a souvenir because people were not making or using that sort of "traditional Bai jar" any more. He then started talking about the unearthed Nanzhao Tiles, claiming the characters on such tiles were Bai written language because the Yi had no burning techniques, [5] asking "how could they do that?" and saying that the

[5] "Nanzhao Tiles" refer to the tiles which were excavated in the ancient town of Dali in the 1930s. More were found near Dali prefecture in 1958. The most striking thing on these tilts is some semi-intelligible words, some of which are Chinese characters, some are not (see Appendix 2).

words on such tiles are not Yi written forms at all. By showing me one of the traditional skills the Bai possess, Mr. Wang highlighted with a strong sense of superiority the difference between the Yi and Bai.

On the way to the ten-day market in the region, my hostess and I went up to a rural woman who was selling home-made dried bean-fritters. The bargaining began:

- How much [a kilo]?
- 1.2 *yuan*
- Come on, mate, we are all *Beni Bezi* [self-appellations for Bai people].
- OK then, 1 *yuan* per kilo

The ethnic label identified in the five episodes above all refers to the one Bai Identity, although the subjective identification with this is in varying degrees.[6] The state demarcated each *minzu* category in the 1950s, and one's official *minzu* status is one of the five entries that appear on the two important identity mechanisms of a Chinese citizen: the ID card and the *hukou* (household registration booklet). *Minzu* identity is a routine entry for all forms of personal data. But Bai Identity still means something beyond this and has substantive referents for the people who either claim it or are ascribed it. Moreover, members in the Bai category frequently identify themselves with the label. I became interested in finding out what the Bai identify with.

As will be scrutinized in the next chapter, my anthropology training had provided me with much literature on the studies of Chinese *minzu* groups in English.

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[6] I selected and listed these episodes here because they were what struck me most in my fieldwork. I did not understand, since *minzu* labels and legal *minzu* identities are all fixed there in the official documents, why then people are still so sensitive as to whether they are Bai, Yi or Han. And they keep articulating their Bai identities seriously on various occasions and in various forms.

Viewing socialism as a kind of colonialism (such as Bulag 2000), all the post-colonial criticism on state agency seemed to emphasize that the Chinese minzu *peoples* were totally brainwashed, if not colonized, and they were merely reproducing state discourses. And there is criticism of the Chinese state for "the assumption the groups gathered into one nationality (*sic*) would be happy to integrate into such a political entity."(Lemoine 2005:1) But my fieldwork suggested that the situation was more complicated. Agency is not solely in the hands of the state; it is also at the local level and expressed on different occasions in different ways, as in the above. Besides the local lay people and *minzu* intellectuals, most of the local cadres I met at the village or township or county level might be Hanised (Sinicised or Hanified) but they did not necessarily want to be Han. They still preferred to speak minority languages, maintained close kinship ties to people in their natal place and observed their own customs wherever they were. My educated informants often explained their strong Bai identities in terms of a deeply rooted tradition of ethnicity, again pointing to a unique cultural tradition that exclusively belongs to the Bai. Moreover, despite the continuous assimilation projects since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and intense political pressure during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), state mechanisms had not broken down/destroyed Bai Identity as intended. Instead, reinforced *minzu* identities[7] unexpectedly have boomed in the new socio-political contexts.

I became interested in what the cultural traditions of the Bai are, and how they perceive or practice Bai-ness in the current socio-political context. In most cases, wherever I went in Dali (DBAP), I tried to mingle with whomever was willing to

[7] Which are sceptically referred to as "officially named identity" by some researchers though (D. Wu 1994[1991]:159).

facilitate my research. After knowing my background as a staff member at the provincial state university working for a PhD degree and my research interest in Bai culture and history, many people expressed their strong self-proclaimed obligation to facilitate my research. I went to tomb sites on scorching afternoons with people who insisted that those were valuable relics, and that I could find all the historical records I needed in the inscriptions there. Such trips sometimes turned out to be in vain, either because they could not identify which tombs they meant to show me, or because such tombs were not there at all. I also had other moving experiences, such as someone carrying his grandchild on his back and walking miles to another village to show me the old house of his family or their communal god, or to introduce me to someone who knew more about Bai history. I also had a taxi-motorist who thought I had missed some important historical sites and was willing to take me there free upon realising that I was not planning to go. These kinds of instances happened frequently, if not every day. Compared with the ripped-off tourists, I was well taken care of and meticulously attended to. But why? Their motivation seemed to be beyond simple hospitability. One possible explanation is that finding out (no matter by whom) who they are and where they come from is very important and highly regarded. The desire to know the history of themselves and their place overrides commercial motivations even under the current market economy.

Since the term "identity" is not something found in the lexicon of the Bai language, this thesis tries to look into different ways of *being* and *making* Bai, so as to pin down scattered ideas implicitly held by the people and to unscramble what people mean when they say they are *Baizu*. Moreover, the Bai have been recently

formally and informally organising themselves, to show that "they are in fact subversive, talking of Bai, not Han, matters" (see Blum 1994:325n31).

In the following section, I will introduce who the Bai are, and what they have been through at some crucial points in history. I will start with some basic data about the Bai, and perceptions from the general Chinese population, Chinese historians, Western researchers and the self-perceptions of the people under study. Then I will account for two fundamental references that have shaped and legitimised the Bai today: data from local history which has been an important source of Bai identities, and the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) that demarcated in the 1950s those we call the Bai today.

1.2 Who the Bai are

The Chinese government officially recognised 55 *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minority groups) in China between the 1950s and 1979 through the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP). The Bai people were among the first thirty-eight groups recognized as a separate *minzu* group, regardless of the fact that the Bai people's incorporation into Han culture is visible in many aspects of life.[8] The Bai have accepted the official term *Baizu*, which encompasses two subgroups under the pan-Bai category, the *Leme* and *Nama*. The Bai are the second largest *shaoshu minzu*

[8]See F. K. Hsu (1948), D. Wu (1989, 1990, 1991), Blum (1994, 2001), Notar (1999) for more ethnographies on the Hanisation of the Bai. Linguists find a large percentage of loan words from Medieval Chinese around the seventh century (Ramsey 1989 :291)

in Yunnan Province China with a population of 1,858,063 in 2000.[9] About 80% of the Bai population live in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP), which was founded on November 22, 1956. The Bai make up 33.24% of the total population of DBAP (see Table 1.p.56).[10] The Bai people (*Baizu*) have been well recognized as a distinct *minzu* group and therefore have been the subject of many surveys, investigations and reports.

The Chinese character "Bai" in *Baizu* is the standard Mandarin word for "white". Literally "the Bai" means "the white people", which has nothing to do with skin colour. Yet the colour of white is often cited as one of the major Bai characteristics such as in the white screen wall (see Ills. 5 & 52) at the entrance of Bai houses, the white fancy dresses Bai women wear on special occasions (see Ill. 4), the white and blue boutique (see Ill. 55) and their *benzhu* worship (see Chapter Five).[11] There is not a traditional and consistent overarching group label to cover what we call the Bai today. As will unfold below, during the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) in the 1950s the term *Baizu* was chosen based on different self-appellations and names given by other peoples. Different labels have been used to refer to the

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[9] *China's Ethnic Statistical Yearbook 2004* (p.487), Beijing: Ethnic Minority Publishing House.

[10] The Bai population has been increasing steadily: 567119 (1953), 706623 (1964), 1132224 (1982) to 1598052 (1990) (MacKerras 2001:252). Besides DBAP, there are Bai communities in Bijie, Guizhou province and Sangzhi, Hunan province.

[11] Some of these characters are retained for the sake of retaining a Bai identity, women are supposed to wear Bai dress in the tourist industry, houses along the street are required to be built in Bai-style featuring white walls and elaborated doors. In fact, such cultural markers of ethnic identity they rely on are shared by other people, or have variations locally, even in other parts of China (in terms of religious practices).

predecessors of the Bai at different times in history,[12] but self-appellations are *Bezi, Beni, and Beho,* all meaning the white people. So the state-defined label *Baizu* attempted to capture both the sound and the meaning of the equivalent ethnonyms in Mandarin (pronounced in Yunnan dialect). The Bai population also includes those who call themselves *minjia*,[13] and those living in west Yunnan called *Leme* by the Lisu, *Nama* by the Naxi, *Tujia* by the Han.[14] The *Leme* and *Nama* all call themselves *Beni* or *Beho* (meaning white people).[15] Differences among these subgroups under the pan-Bai category are visible by women's dress and audible by different dialects. The Bai speak a Tibeto-Burman language with a high percentage of loan Chinese words. There are three Bai dialects among the Bai.[16] Whether or not there existed a Bai written form has been in debate (see Chapter Three); a state-sponsored Bai written form has been under construction.

[12] Prior to the NECP, labels given to predecessors of Bai including ethnic peoples in southeast China by Han Chinese included *yiman, wuman, baiman, boren* and *minjia*. For an elaboration of historical formation of the Bai, see Hayashi (1995). See also similar cases among the Karen (Keyes, 1979; Lehman 1979). Unlike Lehman, I maintain that ethnic labels have some prior connections with differentiations made in history.

[13] Also spelt as Min-chia, Min-ch'iang in Davies (1970 [1909]). In Fitzgerald's day (1930s), one-third of the inhabitants were Min-chia in the Ancient Town of Dali. Meanings of *minjia* will be addressed later in this chapter.

[14] Generally speaking, all the Bai and other ethnic minority groups in Yunnan were recorded as *yiman, wuman, baiman, boren* in Chinese history books. Bai official historian Zhang Xu (1981) mentions that names of the Bai given by other people can be as many as more than sixty, but I think some of these names he lists are simply names other people, especially Southeast Asians, address the Chinese with, such as *datang, darong, ...*

[15] Davies (1970[1909]:70) categorizes the *lama* under the Min-chia due to the "closely connected" language features. My fieldwork suggests there might be some link historically, but those who call themselves *lama* today view themselves different from the *minjia,* so do those who identify with the *minjia*, although both subgroups admit an ancestral connection.

[16] Xu and Zhao (1984), Allen (2004).

It is not exaggerating to say that the official label *Baizu* (the Bai people) is a household word in China.[17] The Bai have become well known to the Chinese population as a *minzu* group for the following four reasons: (1) the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) in the 1950s; (2) one of the only two feature movies about *minzu* in the early 1960s and late 1970s, *The Five Golden Flower*, screened nationwide; [18] (3) a Gongfu movie based on a bestseller novel, *Heavenly Dragons*, by a high-profile Taiwanese writer (also see Notar 1999:156-167); (4) tourism promotions since the 1990s.[19] Of the four on this list, the film and bestselling novel are recurring points of reference in daily conversations and even in the local landscape. There is a "Heavenly Dragon Town" (a kind of movie world) in the old Town of Dali, and a series of large reprinted posters from the 1950s film *The Five Golden Flower* are on display in one of the main tourist spots, The Butterfly Pond (see Ill. 49). During my fieldwork, the Bai category and the 56 *minzu* labels (including the Han) were taken for granted and perceived as such by the people within and outside these category boxes according to my interviews.

1.2.1 External understandings and perceptions of the Bai

To understand who the Bai are, it is equally important to know where they are

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[17] Blum (1994), also see Harrell (1956b) for similar accounts among the Yi.

[18] See Notar (1999:86-121) for an account of the feature movie, pp. 147-151 for an account of the original filming-site villagers' reaction to the movie. See also Ill. 49.

[19] I start this thesis with these 'external factors', which means events and initiatives that originated from outside the Bai category, because I want to emphasize that ethnicity and ethnic identity is as much an external identification as an internal one. External factors have had a huge impact on internal identifications although we must definitely look into subjective identification when examining ethnic identity. And this is not to say that these four incidents are determinatives, rather they are contemporary contexts of differences.

from and whom they were known as in recorded history. Inevitably one has to rely, to a large extent, on historical documents in Chinese archives which date back to the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD). Although such documents are sometimes more about the imperial states rather than about the ethnic minorities,[20] they are still valuable in providing external perceptions and an account of the social environment non-Han peoples have come through. For instance, some historical Chinese representations of the Bai simply record that food and loose women seem to constitute major difference between predecessors of the Bai and the Han (Notar 1999:50-59), indicating that predecessors of the Bai were seen as not different from any other ethnic peoples and were regarded as the 'immoral' Other vis-à-vis the 'civilised' Han.

Nevertheless, the origins of the Bai have been debated both inside and outside of China, by both Bai and non-Bai researchers. I will elaborate the study of Bai origins by the Bai in Chapter Three to demonstrate how origin studies became a device to construct the Bai. Here I will summarise three theories to illustrate who the Bai are according to non-Bai researchers in Chinese and English literature.[21] The first theory maintains that the Bai are a distinct people different from the Han, the second theory holds that the Bai are a hybrid people, and the third theory argues that the Bai are actually Han who obtained an ethnic label for instrumental reasons. All three theories

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[20] Also see Jonsson (2000) and Diamond (1988). Regarding the ethnic groups in Dali, there were only 22 non-Han groups in Yunnan, less than one fifth of those listed in some Qing (1644-1911) texts (Mullaney 2004b:217). Ling Chunsheng (1936 from Mullaney 2004b:216) argues that among the hundreds of non-Han groups catalogued in Qing sources, most were the same stock just with different labels. Ling is primordially dependent on descent studies in identifying ethnic groups. No attention was given to the subjective perception of those under study.

[21] According to Hayashi (1995), Japanese researchers maintain that the Bai are aboriginal. For a list of Bai origin studies conducted by Japanese researchers, see Hayashi (1995).

have supporters among Bai researchers (see Chapter Three 3.2.1) with different priorities and emphases. This section intends to display an external view and, to some extent, a literature review on the study of the Bai.

The first theory has been supported by Chinese historical documents and records. Chinese historians and ethnologists have never agreed upon the origin of whom we call the Bai today, but they all have some specific label for the predecessors of the Bai. It was *xi'erheman* (barbarians of the west of Erhai) in the Tang (618-907AD) dynasty and *Boren* (*Bo* people) in the Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty, although some people under such labels identified themselves as Han descendents as early as the Tang dynasty.[22] Based on Yuan literati Li Jin's *The Ethnography of Yunnan,*[23] and local gazetteers, some scholars within China, like You Zhong (1994), argue that the Bai people as a ethnic group originate from the local indigenous tribe *Boren* 僰人 (*Bo* people, a homophone of the modern Chinese *Bai* pronounced in local dialect) intermixed with Han people who had immigrated to parts of what is currently Yunnan province since the Qin (221-207BC) and Han (206BC-220AD) dynasties.[24] The "native" theory was also held among early researchers who visited Dali (Ts'ai 1941).

Later, researchers took some non-historical approaches and came to the same theoretical conclusion. Zhu Jiazheng et al (1983) conclude that people in the West

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[22] For an English account of such claims of different peoples in southern China, see David Faure (1987).

[23] The first ethnography of Yunnan documented during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

[24] Yet *Boren* as an ethnic label adopted in the Yuan (1368-1644) dynasty may refer to different people including the predecessors of the current Bai .See Hayashi (1995:9-16) for a detailed review of history studies on this issue conducted after the 1970s.

Town are ethnically Bai (cf. F. K. Hsu 1948) based on their fieldwork in the 1950s from a socio-historical evolutionist perspective. From a cultural perspective, Yokoyama (1990 from Liang Yongjia 2003:13) argues that the Bai in Zhoucheng have never lost their ethnic identity even under the long-term impact of the Han.

The first theory is generally supported by linguistic evidence except Bao Lubing (2002[1942]).[25] Davies (1970[1909]:344) notes the Min-chia [*minjia]* are an ethnically mixed 'race' but still views them as a separate group based on ethnolinguistic features. Contemporary linguists firmly maintain that the Bai have a strong separate identity from neighbouring peoples (see Wiersma 1990, Allen 2004). But when it comes to judging the Bai language, Wiersma (1990) cautiously describes it as "vague" (p.5), "imprecise" (p.6), "problematic" (p.6), "linguistically difficult to distinguish" (p.6) and associated with "mixed cultural identities" (p.7). These research findings actually imply a more hybrid than distinctly Bai identity in terms of ethnolinguistic features, especially given the fact that there are three Bai dialects in the prefecture.

The second theory maintains that the Bai are indeed hybrid in their cultural origins.[26] Scholars in this group view the Bai as neither ethnic or Han, but hybrid due to their extensive contacts with the Han (Fang Guoyü1957b&c, Lin Chaomin 1985a&b, You Zhong 1994, Hayashi 1995). Some further assume that the Bai have a higher level of *hanhua* (Hanisation) and have a *"xianjinde"* (advanced) culture in

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[25] See Chapter Three (3.2.1) for a Bai perspective of native theory.

[26] Some Bai researchers also maintain hybrid theory, see Chapter Three 3.2.1.

contrast to other indigenous groups in Yunnan.[27] As shown previously, such a discourse is also often taken for granted among ordinary local Chinese today although their being 'advanced' might not be endorsed by historians. The first English ethnography on some of the predecessors of the Bai was written by C. P. Fitzgerald who noted that the Min-chia "have absorbed so much of Chinese culture" (1941:93). According to Fitzgerald (1941:12-13), when Mongolians conquered Nanzhao kingdom, they found local people were "industrious and skilled" farmers, and they called them "Min Chia", a non-contemptuous Chinese term meaning civilians or the "common people." This interpretation of the label "Min Chia [*minjia*]" is only one of the many different meanings given to it at different times in history, according to Chinese historians (Bao Lubing 2002[1942];[28] Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:17; Fang Guoyü1957a&b; Lin Chaomin1985a&b; Mu Jihong 1990 and Wang Wenguang 1997:310, 2005:810). They argue that it could have included Han civilian migrants in opposition to military migrants, or locals in opposition to migrants, or other dichotomies. Their bottom line is: *minjia* was not a self-appellation or an ethnic label as it is claimed, and it has nothing to do with ethnicity or the self-

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[27] Straightforward historical sources basically composed by Han imperial literati created a comparison between the civilized Self (Han) and uncivilized Other (non-Hans). Driven by an overwhelming discrimination towards the 'southwest barbarians', imperial writers often totally ignore some local people's ancestry ties with the Han from central or eastern parts of China and regarded them as non-Han indigenous. For an account of the legacy of 'advanced' Bai culture, also see Notar (1999:238).

[28] Although Bao Lubing (2002/12[1942]:235-255) argues that the *minjia* first appeared in the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty referring to local inhabitants but not used to designate an ethnic group. Bao also points out insightfully that *minjia* gradually became a term to refer to the offspring of Duan's subjects. One of the Duan lineage, Duan Zongbang, is the supreme deity of all Bai local deities (see chapter five); and his great grandson, Duan Siping, was the first Bai king of the Dali kingdom in the 9th century. Also see Wang Wenguang (1997:310-311).

appellations of the Bai. Other historians (see Fang Guoyü 1957b&c) prefer not to draw any definite boundaries due to the fluidity of this label in history.[29]

Hybridity may also mean that the Bai are biologically Han (see a local Bai perspective in Chapter Three 3.2.1) but culturally mixed. Most writers outside China have noted the Bai have close cultural ties with the Han and are among the most acculturated Chinese ethnic minorities (Mackerras 2001: 262). Focusing on the study of Buddhist art and iconography, Helen Chapin (1944:135) discovers that most of the Avalokitesvara images cast in Nanzhao (752-902AD) and Dali (938-1382AD) kingdoms show strong "Chinese affinity", made and worshipped "*as their own*" by the local people (emphasis added). In most cases, hybridity is a general term to indicate that distinguishable Bai-ness is beyond theorisation or distinct ethnic distinction. A Chinese sociologist observed that the predecessors of the Bai were "not quite a minority [*sic*], but not quite Chinese [Han] either" (Tao Yunkui [1943] quoted in David Wu 1994[1991]:157). This is also the case with the most commonly claimed self-appellation *minjia*.

The third theory argues that the Bai are not different from the Han.[30] Liang Yongjia (2003:62,120) argues that being very far inland, people in Dali preserved more Han customs of the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty. Francis Hsu (1948) wrote about the people in West Town who are officially and subjectively Bai today. Hsu analyses their "typical Chinese" behaviour in kinship systems and ancestor worship, which

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[29] David Faure (1987, 1989) argues that becoming *min* (civilian, subject) was related to tax status and settlement rights rather than ethnicity in late imperial China. See also Hiroko Yokoyama (1992) for an elaboration of different classifications of Dali inhabitants in the census registration from 1691 to 1912.

[30] See Chapter Three (3.2.1) for the same theory elaborated by Bai researchers.

brings him critiques (see Leach 1982, Duan Weiji 2004). David Wu (1994[1991]) justifies Hsu's unawareness of his subjects' ethnic identity by arguing that people under Hsu's pen were actually Han Chinese. On different occasions, Wu emphasizes, the same people identify with the Bai or with the Han at different times after the 1930s (1990, 1994[1991]). It is quite likely that the elite in West Town and ancient town of Dali identified with the Han before the NECP. The comparatively higher level of Bai status and their perceived higher level of education both in their own eyes and among non-Bai (see Chapter Four), and the fact that the Bai are "Han-speaking and well adapted seem to suggest that "they were Han all along!"(Blum 1994: 235) However, after the NECP "people in Kunming and Yunnan in general take it [the Bai category] to be real" (Blum 1994:236). McKhann (1998 n.24) says that the Bai were nearly-assimilated Han Chinese, before ethnicity became fashionable in China.

From an etic perspective, these three theories demonstrate, to different degrees, who the Bai are/were. Yet in the past five decades, local Bai researchers have been arguing that the Bai people and a Bai culture are historically aboriginal (see chapter three). At this stage, it is enough to note the fact that the Bai have today taken the Bai category for granted and located the perceived Bai ethnicity in their housing style (see Ills. 53 & 54), local singing style, local diet and spoken language, to name only a few criteria. They sincerely believe they are different from other peoples, especially the Han, without being able to offer "a convincing explanation for these differences" (Wu 1990:170, 1994[1991]:159). For the Bai features their claim relies on are often shared in the region. Dali and villages around Erhai Lake are assumed as "the origin

of the Bai." Moreover, in recent Chinese history, identity has fluctuated quite dramatically. People tended to identify with the Han due to severe ethnic discrimination in the 1930s and 1940s (see Wu 1989, 1999, 1990, 1994[1991]). During the Great Leap Forward in 1957 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), any expression of ethnicity and differences were suppressed by ultra-leftist radicalism; no one was keen to articulate any salient *minzu* identity. In the 1980s and 1990s, the wheel turned; people started to mark themselves off from Han and also from other "barbarian" peoples (Wu 1989).

Nonetheless, the three theories are all embedded in versions of local history and related to the historical interactions between the state and the locality. And there are three main criteria that determine who the Bai are today: firstly, the historical interactions between the central state and the locality; secondly, the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP); and thirdly, people's subjective identity. While the first two elements provide the contexts where layerings of Bai identities have been constituted from an external perspective, the last element, the subjective perception, is decisive and the focus of this thesis. Next, I will cover the first two elements in terms of what the state did to these people in some important projects and the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) which may show when and under what circumstances the Bai as a *minzu* category came into being.

1.2.2 Historical interactions with the state

Prior to 1949, peoples were not defined as ethnic blocks in the way they are defined today.[31] This section draws attention to the impact of state schemes on the predecessors of the Bai in the imperial era. These schemes were targeting Dali as well as southwest China prior to the Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty, when Yunnan Province was initially established.

The Han and the predecessors of the Bai[32] have been very close historically and geographically since the first recorded encounter more than two millennia ago due to the strategic geographic position of Dali and the vague relationship between the imperial state and the periphery. To the central court, Dali was an exit on the Southwest Silk Road[33] in the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD). It had also been an important passage between central China to India and the Middle East for merchants since the Tang (618-907AD) dynasty. Most significantly, Dali was the capital city of Nanzhao (752-902AD) and Dali (938-1382AD) kingdoms, whose relationships with the Tang and Song (960-1279AD) courts were complicated.

Wars, education and migration schemes between Dali and the imperial courts were common. The "barbarians" surrounding the Middle Kingdom had long been viewed as constant sources of trouble (Dreyer1976:8-9). They kept raiding the interior region for land, women and properties, as the Nanzhao state did. To solve such acute problems, different methods were employed continuously by the central

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[31] See the cases for the Yi (Harrell 1990a, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c), the Miao/Hmong (Schein 1986, 1989, 1997, 2000; Diamond 1995, Tapp 1995, 2002), and the Yao (Faure 1987, Litzinger 2000).

[32] Unlike the pre-1949 Miao (Diamond 1995; Cheung 2003), many ancestors of the Bai were recorded as Han offspring rather than 'uncivilized barbarians'.

[33] See Yang Bin (a) (2004) for a detailed documentation of this international trade route and Yunnan's role in trans-regional interactions.

courts, by way of intermarriage,[34] educational assimilation through *jiaohua* schemes (meaning civilising the uncivilised through educational transformation) and 'loose control' (*jimi*) over local rulers. These were the most common strategies in southwest China. Wars often resulted in the settlement of immigrants.

It is often recorded that the first immigrants from central China to Yunnan were led by Zhuangqiao and arrived around 300 BC.[35] It is also recorded that the famous Chinese general Zhuge Liang came with his army around 225BC. Zhuge called locals and all those earlier Han migrants "barbarians" and called his troops "outsiders" (Liu Xiaobing 1991:128). A planned migration scheme did not start until one of the Han dynasty (206 BC-220AD) emperors sent "wealthy migrants to farm in the southwest" as recorded in *Shiji* (The book of Historians) (in Xie Guoxian 1996:24).[36]

During the Nanzhao period (752-902AD), migration happened in the form of wars or at times of conflict. On the one hand, the Tang court sent 200,000 troops to Dali between 751 and 754AD. On the other hand, the Nanzhao court kidnapped some

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[34] While many Western anthropologists emphasise that intermarriage was promoted as an imperial assimilation scheme (Brown 2004, Gladney 2004), I emphasise that ethnic minorities have historically used education and intermarriage (with Han immigrants) to enhance their social status and draw lines between themselves and the internal others within their own group or other ethnic minority peoples.

[35] Yet, according to Xie Guoxian (1996), these first immigrants led by Zhuanqiao were not ethnically Han. Hayashi (1995:29-34) questions the validity of the accounts of Zhuangqiao's immigration. He argues that first immigrants from inner China arrived in Yunnan in late Qin dynasty (221-207BC), and there is no reason to assume that the immigrants from inner China were the same as the Han today. For a scrutiny of the formation of the Han, see Fei's volume (1991b) and Xu Jieshun (1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2000).

[36] The first Chinese chronicle that recorded the first three thousand year history written by Sima Qian (1458-85 B.C.).

200,000 people, mostly craftsmen and women, from Chengdu and other parts of Tang territory in a number of raids. [37] Such encounters brought in Han culture, the ramifications of which did not stop even after the Tianbao War (751-761AD) between Nanzhao and Tang court after the withdrawal of imperial troops.[38] The Yuan (1279-1368) court sent 2,096 households to farm southwest China.[39] The Ming (1368-1644) court sent 300,000 troops.[40] In addition, family members of some servicemen were sent to Yunnan during the Ming dynasty. As a result, the total population of Yunnan increased from around 3.5 million (about 1 million were Han immigrants) in the Ming dynasty to 6 million in the Qing (1644-1911) dynasty (Gu Yongji 2003:74-76). Most of these immigrants came from places we now call Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangzhou, Sichuan, Guizhou, Zhejiang and Henan provinces[41] to join military and farming camps. Large numbers of immigrants changed the local population composition, foregrounding their social relations and shaping Bai identities today.

Apart from the state-organized migrations, there were also some non-organized migrants including official post holders, businessmen (mainly salt traders),

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[37] Historians have been debating over the proximate numbers and validity of historical texts.

[38] See You Zhong (1990:168) and Wang Wenguang 1996/3 for more. The point is historical record of Yunnan and Dali may refer to the same locality.

[39] Data from Cai Zhichun (2002:86). According to Cai, the military and civilian *tuntian* (agrarian camps) during the Yuan dynasty exceed any dynasty in size and scale all over China.

[40] This is what most historians agree, but different historians have different figures regarding Ming migrants, see Liu Xiaobing (1991:244), Xie Guoxian (1996), Lu Ren (1997b, 1999a, 1999b), Gu Yongji (2003) for details.

[41] During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), there were 58 Jiangxi clubs, 32 Huguan clubs, 27 Sichuan clubs, 13 Guizhou clubs, 9 Qinjing clubs, 4 Guangdong clubs, 4 Fujian clubs and 4 Jiangnan clubs in Yunnan (Gu Yongji 2003:77). Also see Xie Guoxian (1996).

runners-away from taxation or military services during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Liu Xiaobing 1991:110, Lu Ren 2000). James Lee argues that population growth in southwest China did not occur until the 13th century (Lee 1982:714) (see Table 2. p.56). Lee explains that the rise of mines, cities and trade in Yunnan caused by the rise of industry in central China attracted immigration and population growth between the 18th – 19th centuries (pp.742-43). Lee's argument may well account for the post-13th century situation while the pre-13th century was difficult to track for lack of local sources, except for state military records. There are two points we have to keep in mind when attending to such migration data. Firstly, immigrants from diverse places of origin settled down in ethnically diverse Dali, co-inhabited by predecessors of the Bai. Secondly, intermarriage between Han and non-Han has always been common and acceptable in the Confucian ideology that dominated most imperial states.

Apart from wars, migration and intermarriage, another impact of the state on local identity was through education schemes (see Harrell 1995a). Education schemes had started long before all the conflicts and skirmishes that were sometimes the cause and sometimes the effect of the previously mentioned migrations. The imperial state was concerned with 'civilising' not only the 'periphery' indigenous people, but also Han migrants and their offspring.[42] After the Ming dynasty (1279-1368), significant social changes occurred not only in the indigenous/migrant population ratio, but also

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[42] Zhu Yuanzhang (Yuan emperor) remarked that the hereditary officials never had access to learn *liyi* (manners and etiquette) (see Fang Hui 1996 for detail) and Zhu worried that being far isolated from the 'centre', Han migrants may *jian yu qi xin* (gradually transform their custom) (Liu Xiaobing 1991:251). Discrimination had not reached its climax until the Republic era (1911-1949).

in local practices. The latter was achieved through *jiaohua*, civilising the uncivilised through educational transformation. That is why in the Yuan (1279-1386) ethnography *Yunnan Zhi*, writer Li Jing was surprised by the high level of literacy among local indigenous people who worship Wang Xizhi [(around 321-379AD) a famous calligrapher], but not Confucius and Mencius.It was reasonable for Li Jing to make this remark. What is currently known as Yunnan has had central state schools since the Han (206BC-220AD) dynasty (Lu Ren 1997a), and the Nanzhao rulers all read and wrote in Chinese. A systematic education scheme did not start until the Yuan dynasty. The first Confucian school in Dali was set up in 1285.[43] After decades of Confucian education, the state started to organize imperial examinations in Yunnan in 1412 to recruit state officials and magistrates (Fang Hui 1996:21).

Considering the significant changes in the proportion of indigenous and migrants among the local population in southwest China, and taking into account the continuous education schemes of the imperial courts, historians argue that there was a Bai-isation, or indigenisation in Dali before the Ming dynasty. Indigenisation reached its climax in the Nanzhao and Dali periods. Then a Hanisation (*hanhua*) happened after the Ming dynasty (1279-1368) (see also Armijo-Hussein 1996). Such two way boundary-crossing in history was well accepted both inside and outside China until Hayashi (1995:36) denied that indigenisation ever happened. Hayashi argues that as a ruling class the Han immigrants have never given up their cultural traits. Hayashi is

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[43] Fang Hui 1996:17. In 1369, the Ming emperor instructed that all prefectures and counties should set up schools (Liu Xiaobing 1991:250). For an account of regional difference in terms of education, see Lin Juan (2000), for an autobiographic account of education development in a Bai village; see Zhang Wenxun (1998).

obviously judging ethnicity (Han and non-Han in this case) solely by the cultural traits maintained under each category, totally ignoring subjective identification, the dynamics between ethnicity and culture, and all the available theoretical advances in anthropology.

It is the task of historians to find out whether early Han immigrants ever went native or not. My concern is not really to discern who turns into whom, but instead, to emphasise the long term interactions and impacts between interacting parties, and to point out that it is all a matter of a "believed-in traditional model" (Ward 1965:134) rather than any rigid differentiations in terms of social structure and culture. The long history of assimilation affected the Bai no less than anyone else in South China. Assimilation happens in two ways, indigenisation and Hanisation (see T'ao Yun-kun 1943 from Wu 1989), and there is no clear division between these two ways as Chinese historians assert, not to mention the fact that there were no clear boundaries among the equally vague ethnic group labels who are now reckoned as predecessors of the Bai before the 1950s.[44]

Given the long term contacts between locals and migrants, it can be inferred that most people have been neither more nor less Han/non-Han like many other inhabitants in southern China (see Ward 1965, Schafer 1967, Ma Rong 2002), and there was tremendous ambiguity and flexibility in ethnic identities prior to the 1950s and even in *minzu* identities after the 1950s. This ambiguity can provide evidence for both Han and non-Han identity simply because either identity can be traced from the same ancestral inheritance. One can identify as Han by claiming to be a descendent

[44] With some other ethnic minority groups, such as Miao, Tibet and Mongolian and the Yi in Liangshan, etc. boundaries were clear and well maintained though.

of Han migrants, and the same person can also claim to be Bai by demonstrating his/her local matrilineal ancestry. Apart from these primordialist claims, education can be a variable in the sense that once educated, and motivated to contest equal status with the Han, some local people started to write up their family history and identify with their Han patrilineal ancestor when ethnic discriminations were rampant. Such revisions of identity have been acceptable both culturally and officially in history and today (see state classification criteria in the next section). In such a socio-historical context, Bai identities have evolved and grown.

Next, I will introduce the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) because the Bai as a *minzu* group had not been designated and demarcated until after the NECP. This means that before the NECP, the predecessors of the Bai might have had different ethnonyms or might have been classified under 'ethnic' as social different labels.

1.2.3 The National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP)

The NECP was a state-organised national project to classify the Chinese at the very beginning of New China, which may be compared with other classification schemes such as caste and moieties (Blum 2002). In a sense, this thesis deals with the reactions of the Bai people to the *minzu* categories legitimated by the NECP. There is no way to talk about contemporary Chinese *minzu* groups and the Bai as a conceptual category or as an enacted identity without introducing the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP). It was after the NECP that the 55 *minzu* become an obvious presence and formed discernible social categories. This means there were no Naxi, Yi or Bai identities pre-1949, but this does not mean there were no such ethnic

groups before that time; they just did not exist in the same way. The NECP provides legitimated categories for the current ethnic identification both at individual and collective levels. But this cannot account for the symbolic meanings and choices that communities have encoded their identifications with. To understand the NECP requires an analysis that takes account of the historical context and the two-way relationships between the state and the people so classified. This section will briefly introduce who devised the NECP, when the NECP was carried out and what the NECP has brought to the Bai. I will leave to the next chapter why and how the NECP was carried out, its conceptual implications and the theoretical debates they have been about it.

The NECP started right after the first national population census (1953) of the new government.[45] Following a former Soviet model, the Chinese state launched this nationwide project to identify who were the ethnic people and how many categories there were (see Fei 1980, 1981:13). Practically, the newly established state needed to set up a National People's Congress, the supreme legislative authority of the nation. This could not be carried out without a clear number of ethnic categories. At that time, the only politically correct definition of ethnic groups was to draw on Stalin's definition of the Russian term нация: a community that shares common territory, a common language, a common economic life and a common psychological make-up (Stalin 1953). The Chinese equivalent for нация is *minzu* (Hao Shiyuan

[45] For a collection on the NECP, see Huang Guangxue (ed.) (1995); see Gong Yin (1999) for a fieldwork report among the Bai and Fei (1980, 1999). For more analyses in English literature, see McKhann (1998), Tapp (2002), and Mackerras (2004).

2003a,b&c),[46] which includes the Han (*Hanzu*) who were recorded as 91.59% of the national population in 2000 national census and *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minority groups), referring to the rest of the population who claim to be, or are, non-Han.

In the early 1950s, fieldwork teams were sent all over the country to conduct "scientific" (Fei 1981:14, Li Shaoming 2002:34), historical, ethnolinguistic and ethnographic research before the current 55 *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minorities) were officially recognized (see Huang Guangxue 1995, Hao Shiyuan 1999). Large-scale NECP was conducted in the late 1950s. Initially, 38 of the most undisputable *shaoshu minzu* were identified; the Bai were among them. Follow-up identifications dragged on into 1979, and the NECP was officially closed in 1983 as far as recognising more *minzu* went.[47] In a word, the NECP has as much created as recognized many of the ethnic minority groups out of a combination of political, strategic, and pragmatic concerns (Harrell 1989, Gladney 2004) in addition to Stalin's criteria and collective requests (even though most of these requests were denied, reasonably or unreasonably).

Baizu, rather than other ethnonyms, was taken as the group name in 1956 (FangGuoyü 1957:12-17), since *Baizu* covers people whose self-nominations include: *Beni, Bezi* and *Minjia*. After the NECP, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP) was established in 1956. Autonomy means that under the administration of the state, a *minzu* autonomous unit enjoys certain special rights compared to other equivalent non-autonomous administrative units. The head of any autonomous unit must be a

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[46] Different authors discuss Stalin's concept of *minzu* in different Russian terms, e.g. *natsionalnost* (Harrell 2001:39) and *национа¬ность* by Zhou Xuefang (1999).

[47] See Huang Guangxue 1987.

member of that particular group. The autonomous unit can set its own laws and regulations under the guidelines of state ones. There is more local control over the administration of resources, taxes, birth-control quota, education, legal jurisdiction and religious expression (Gladney 2004:19), which include access to local finance, reduction in national fiscal taxation and access to extra financial aids (See *China Year Book* for more). [48] The three hierarchical levels of autonomous administration are at region, prefecture and county levels.

Table 4: Number of autonomous governments in China

		No. nationwide	No. in Yunnan
Autonomous region	Provincial level	5	0
Autonomous prefecture	Prefecture level	30	8
Autonomous county	County level	120	29*

*ZhengyuanYi Hani Lanhu Autonomous county is the most recent autonomous county set up in 1990, while most were set up in the 1950s.[49]

The institutional power of the state met the pragmatic power of local agency when Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP) was set up. Following the pre-1949

[48] See Fei et. al (1956). For discussions of national policies towards ethnic minorities in China, see Blum (1994:56-82), Tapp (1995), Enwall (1995b:29-89), Kaup (2000:65-69, 116-122,182-197), Litzinger (2000), Schein (2000), Heberer (2001). For education policy among ethnic minorities, see Heberer (1989:50-51) and Schoenhals (2001). See Heberer (1989:40-44) for an account of versions of autonomous laws and effects at the local level.

[49] Source: data from *China's Ethnic Statistical Yearbook* (Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian) (2004: 235). Beijing: Ethnic Publishing House published by Guojia Minzu Shiwu Weiyuanhui Jingji fazhansi. See also www.ynethnic.gov.cn accessed 19/10/2006.

administrative arrangements, Dali was composed of ten counties, without Heqing and Jianchuan counties, which have more Bai population (57.04% and 89.65% in 2000 respectively).[50] The old administrative boundaries did not provide Dali with enough Bai population to set up an autonomous prefecture. As a result, Heqing and Jianchuan counties, previously under Lijiang administration, were moved to Dali prefecture administration so that the Bai population exceeded 30% in the prefecture. 30% minority population is a constitutional requirement for setting up an autonomous administration unit at any level. Who these people are was directly linked with who got what and whether all the benefits listed in the autonomy law could become accessible.[51] The establishment of DBAP was an instrumental triumph over local Han and other *minzu* in exhibiting and obtaining local power, which I perceive as the first collective action of the Bai as a *minzu*, if not ethnic, group.

It was taken for granted at the common-sense level that each *shaoshu minzu* should have its own distinctive culture, if not a comparatively exclusive biological/genetic history. After the NECP, the *minzu* categories carry heavy connotations of stasis and permanence, and the Bai people have been represented as a distinctive group who are different from Han and other *minzu.* Even during my fieldwork, differences within the Bai category are well acknowledged in daily

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[50] Data calculated from *The Reference of Population Census of Yunnan in 2000*. compiled by Provincial Population Census Office 2002. Kunming: Yunnan Technology Press. Most of my Jianchuan informants asserted that the Bai population within the county is 95%.

[51] An autonomous prefecture has the right to make its own regulations and modify state instructions, subject to the consideration of the Provincial People's Representative Congress. It can also make its own economic development plans and family planning policy within the guidelines of the state. Ethnic individuals enjoy preference in terms of promotion, training and employment opportunities. Also see: www.ynethnic.gov.cn,

conversations and in written sources, but I have never heard or seen any objections to identify or be identified with the Bai category. Stereotypes of the Bai have been reproduced and reinforced within and outside of the Bai category, to such an extent that the Bai people are expected to have their own culture and history; if not, no one would question any reproduction of such uniqueness.

To the Bai, the experience of being categorized as Bai contributed to the formation of the Bai and has become an important part of Bai identities. The Bai people, as with many other *minzu,* have become a lived community in reaction to the NECP by channelling and fixing the assigned category (also see Harrell 1995a). The Bai people have been reproducing Bai ethnicity and actively maintaining its boundaries in formulating Bai ethnicity and *a* Bai Identity. Being an ethnic minority group, in a Morgan-Stalinist sense, is being 'primitive', but Bai ethnicity is not necessarily unfavourably judged or materially disadvantaged. The high level of Hanisation of the Bai in terms of a high literacy rate and farming skills have been frequent references to illustrate their outstanding position among other *minzu* in Yunnan.

The Bai have survived and sustained themselves as a *minzu* not only because of an externally designated group label, [52] but because of people's subjective identification with and construction of this label for primordial or instrumentalist reasons, or both. We have to bear in mind that emphasising people's subjective identification does not mean that people have sole say in naming who they are. This

[52]Caffrey (2004: 266 n.3) pushes Barth's (1969) classical theoretical model further by pointing out that the boundaries are maintained towards selected others and social groups are shaped by local politics (264). Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on this point.

has been the case *before, during* and *after* the NECP.[53] The state label *Baizu* itself, rather than any of their self-appellations and the fact that *Baizu* covers *minjia, Leme, Nama,* shows that negotiation and compromise happened. Theoretically, the NECP challenged certain anthropological concepts, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

1.3 Research goals

This thesis aims to contextualise the construction of Bai identities in various arenas and how Bai ethnicity has been institutionalised, internalised and substantiated through subjective identification of the Bai since the NECP.[54] This thesis maintains that the interactions between the predecessors of the Bai and the state prior to 1949 and the NECP in the 1950s laid the foundation for who the Bai are both in terms of their self-perceptions and in the eyes of other Chinese. The state, local elites and ordinary people constantly dialogue with each other, bringing about different ways of being Bai and changes in the meanings of being Bai. Bai identities have become

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[53] This is especially true in China where rectifying names (*zheng ming*) has been historically carried out by literati or elders sanctioned by authoritive institutions. However, the reality is not clear-cut or polarised as such In some way, the NECP fitted in with the imperial paradigm. Rectifying names is not only the concern of the Chinese ethnographers to restore order as Gladney (2004:172) points out, but also the request from various groups to justify their ethnic identities, which was granted equal status as the Han since then.

[54] Western researchers have noticed the importance of history in formulating a particular ethnicity or ethnic identity. For instance, among the Hmong (Tapp 1989), the Yi (Harrell 1995b) and Wu Gu (2001), the Hua Miao (Diamond 1995), the Manchu (Rigger 1995).

diffused and standardized within China, and re-emerged after the state repaired past wrongs done during the political movements from 1957 to 1976.

Being aware that Bai identity is a complexity with multiple actors and agencies, I originally intended to explore the meaning-making and some aspects in social practices of the Bai, in which I found confusions and contradictions between official categories and subjective identities, but the Bai seemed to handle these contradictions well. So instead of "trying to find an order behind what is given to us as a disorder" (Levi-Strauss1978:11)[55] or an underlying 'superstructure', this study tries to show that what is seemingly chaos and disorder has a logic within its own disorder.

This thesis also aims to enter into dialogue with scholars and texts produced inside and outside China so as to recognise the context-shaped characteristics of the *Baizu* category and various degrees of Bai identities. Hopefully, this thesis will help an English readership understand the Chinese perceptions and reflect on some of the relevant debates in anthropology. As will be emphasised in the section on methodology, in no sense am I claiming to represent an 'objective' insider experience or perspective. This thesis maintains that Bai identities grow and persist, not because of the persistence of Bai ethnicity but because of the continuous articulations of a unique Bai Identity by the people concerned.[56] Ethnicity is a product of ethnic identification.

Next I will introduce some key words which frequently appear in this thesis.

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[55] On the assumption of there is an order for it is "absolutely impossible to conceive of meaning without order."(Levi-Strauss1978:12)

[56] For an theoretical discussion of the persistence of cultural system, see Spicer (1971).

1.4 Basic terms in specific contexts

To understand the current notion of *minzu* in China, we have to modify "a share[d] set of terms" (Ortner 1984:126) produced outside China. There are various definitions of these terminologies as heuristic or as analytical tools (e.g. Barth 1969, Banks 1996). This thesis has no intention to redefine some of these terms that have "exhausted the analytical rigour of the concept[s]" (Amit 2002:20) for universal application, rather I will try to set these concepts *in the particular contexts under study.*

Sinicisation and Hanisation

The term Sinicisation frequently appears in English literature (e.g. Schafer 1967) "mainly because it is assumed, by scholars trained in the dominant tradition of sinology" (Gladney 2004:13, 59, 171). The term is inappropriate to apply in the current context of *minzu* in China because it is imprecise and misleading.[57] Moreover,

[57] Nor are its antonyms: un-Chinese and non-Chinese. Tracking the usage of this term in English scholarship, I find it is strictly used in a cultural sense and often in opposition to two adjectives: non-Chinese or un-Chinese. Ward (1965) discusses *non-Han descent* Cantonese-speaking boat-dwelling Tanka fishermen, who are regarded as "being not really Chinese" (p.118) by well-educated Cantonese. Yet the Tanka also use "un-Chinese" (p.118) and "non-Chinese" (p.124-126) to describe any behaviour they assume alien vis-à-vis the Western researcher. And they clearly state: "Certainly we [as] Chinese" (p.114) or "We people of China" (p.118) as opposed to "your foreign customs "(p.114). Similarly, Dikotter (1992:2) uses the term "un-Chinese" to describe the imperial perspectives of the assumingly 'peripheral' and 'uncivilized' people when he contextualizes the concept of 'barbarians' in imperial China and the Republican era. This adjective was also employed by the Chinese. In an ethnocentric Ming (1368-1644) ethnography, *Dianzhi (Ethnography of Yunnan*), there is a clear distinction made between the predecessors of the Bai and the Han Chinese, recorded as *huaren*, meaning Chinese: "The customs of the *bairen* (Bai people) are very close to *huaren* (the Chinese), in that the upper class can

Sinicisation (*hanhua* as it is often translated), is often interpreted as a power relation between the Han and periphery ethnic minorities rather than a Confucian cultural transformation process (also see Brown 2004:30). Sinicisation is mostly criticised for assuming "a single civilising vector directed from a China-based imperial centre toward distinct peoples at the margins." (Crossley et. al 2006b:6) This thesis uses Hanisation to replace the inappropriate term Sinicisation. Being Bai does not affect one's identification with being Chinese in the sense of political loyalty, national belonging or cultural affiliation.[58] As I mentioned before, no *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minority) in my fieldwork interviews would deny their identification with Chinese citizenship. I have never met or heard anybody who claimed to be, or was regarded as, un-Chinese or non-Chinese on the ground that they were not Han. The most common word used in China is *hanhua*, in which *hua* means transforming and *hanhua* means "being transformed into the Han [through education or intermarriage], or simply picking up the Han ways". It will be clearer to adopt the term Hanisation or Hanised to describe non-Han Chinese who are influenced by, or have adopted, Han culture (also see Friedman 1994:72) which at least is often a fact.

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read and write while the rest of the population either farm or do their own business."(p. 998) eds. by Liu Zhenwen (a Ming Dynasty writer) reprint in 1991, Kunming Yunnan Education Press). Outside China, "non-Chinese" is used to describe the descendents of Chinese who no longer identify with the Chinese or are confused about their Chineseness, such as the Baba in Melaka (Tan 1988) and ethnic Chinese in New Guinea and Indonesia (Wu 1991). The non-Chinese in Wang Gungwu (1994) are mostly Southeast Asian nationals. David Wu (1994:157) uses "Chinese" to refer to "Han in today's terminology".

[58] Two volumes elaborate on this topic; one is edited by David Faure and Helen F. Siu (1995), the other by Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (1996). Susan Blum (1994:335) observes that the people within China "speak a common language of identity", i.e., all identify with *Zhongguoren* (people of China) no matter what tongue(s) they literally speak.

Moreover, it must be clarified that Hanisation is not a merely twentieth-century Han nationalist interpretation of China's past as Rawski (1996:842) concludes; rather, it is a real experience people in Dali have been through including many non-Han ethnic minorities (see Tapp 1995, Unger 1997). There was an appropriation of Han culture by the local elites in order to obtain or preserve local autonomy and power, as happened all over south China, and Hanisation has actually added to the strength of Bai ethnicity.

Ethnic category/label Vs ethnic group

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, *minzu* (ethnic minority group) is an ethnic category/label defined by the state. So I will start this section by discussing *minzu* and ethnic group.

The *minzu* map of China encompasses the Han (*Hanzu*), the 55 official designated *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minorities) and their subgroups (such as the Nuosu and Sani under the pan-Yi). The Chinese term *minzu* was introduced from a Japanese translation in the early 20th century. It was popularised after the NECP as an official term to refer to all the 56 designated groups. Although the Han are one of the 56 *minzu*, *minzu* is often used as a short form to substitute for *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minorities) in contrast to the Han (*hanzu*). So if anyone declares that "I am *minzu*", s/he means that s/he is not Han.

Minzu is a loose conceptual label by which some people are marked as an ethnically separate group with historical implications and, possibly, biological affiliations. It becomes complex when it comes to the inconsistent translation from

and into English which will be discussed in Chapter Two (2.2.1). Nonetheless, this thesis uses the term 'ethnic group' to refer to predecessors of the Bai or any non-Han people prior to 1950s.

By ethnic group I mean a group whose members presumably share an attachment to one another as an, or imagined, 'ethnically' and 'culturally' distinct group. Each ethnic group is usually internally complex in terms of the 'common' proto-culture that people claim and the different levels or degrees of identification they express. I emphasise that an ethnic category/label is different from the notion of ethnic group.[59] This thesis opposes the confusion or the interchangeable usage of these two terms as Nagata (1981 cited in Harrell 1990a:515) did because it is misleading and denies the subjective identifications at the heart of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Since this thesis looks into the post-NECP situation in China, I start by taking Bai as an ethnic category. Then I proceed to demonstrate how people give life to the Bai category by encoding symbolic meanings and make it a real ethnic group in its full sense.

Moreover, under the current situation in China, the NECP provides a condition in which a *minzu* does not have to be related to a specific culture although this is often claimed. *Minzu* groups do not have to maintain certain cultural traditions to maintain a legal *minzu* status.[60] The fact that *Baizu* (the Bai) are defined,

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[59] Roger Keesing (1975:9-11) was the first to call attention to the need to distinguish cultural categories and social groups in a very broad and general sense. Amit (2002:18) furthers this efforts by pointing out that membership in a category does not indicate "which categories will actually be drawn on for the mobilization of social relations" (see also Lehman 1979).

[60] As a matter of fact, even before NECP, this was the case with ethnic minorities in southwest China. People who had nothing in common in terms of cultural traits were all regarded as *man*蛮 and *yi*夷by

internalised and redefined as a separate *minzu* does not necessarily mean that they are culturally unique.[61]

Ethnic identity and Bai identity

The term 'identity' embodies the positional definitions of actors. Ethnic identity is "never singular but multiply constructed" (Hall1996:4) in a "conceptual organization of intergroup relations" (Lehman 1979:216). Basically this thesis holds that:

> The ethnic identity of a particular group is constructed in a continual and complicated process not only by external forces and arbitrary labelling by outsiders but also by their own social process of creating a self-image (Keyes 1995:151).

Stryker (1992) and Jenkins (1994) make a similar point while De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1995:350) point out:

> Although contrastive attributions of ethnic characteristics from outside the group help shape the inner experience of ethnic belonging during one's life, it is the internally motivated instrumental and expressive uses of ethnicity that are the final determinations of whom we say we are.

Bai identities can be best explained in De Vos and Romanucci-Ross' definition. Bai identities have been "defensive reactions" (Castells 1997:65) to external threats or a changing environment, ranging from general public discriminations and stigma prior to 1949, to affirmative action after the NECP and

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the Han-centric state and literati. People's self-perception was scarcely recorded, if at all.

[61] For a theoretical discussion of culture, identity and difference, see Gupta and Ferguson (1992).

the emergence of tourist markets since the 1980s. Moreover, being Bai has been more of a matter of 'making' rather than 'being', even though in most cases it appears to be a 'becoming' (Hall 1990:225). But this is not to say one is what one identifies with. The relational nature of ethnic identity and complex social-political contexts often constrain what one can identity with. Ethnic identity can also be a personal choice involving locally meaningful practices in everyday life. It must be emphasised that ethnic identity has never circumscribed social units that "contain" cultures in ways that anthropological representations have often implied (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

Whether *minzu* categories in China can be treated as ethnic groups is a thorny issue, much discussed among Chinese researchers and some Western researchers as will be elaborated in Chapter Two. The fact is that people identifying themselves as *Baizu* and actively making the Bai category full, indicate their acknowledgement, if not acceptance, of the label vis-à-vis non-Bai as that which marks them off from the Han, Yi and Naxi, etc. This thesis argues that the Bai have transformed the Bai (*minzu*) 'category' into an ethnic 'group'.

Ethnicity

It has been mentioned that ethnicity is used to substitute for improper early terms such as "tribe, race or barbarians" (Williams 1989:439). But surely these terms are reminiscent of one another; some writers call for a more neutral term because ethnicity still connotes inferior status, or lower social class, in many societies (e.g. Enloe 1973: 265). Since the 1960s, ethnicity has been a subject for anthropological

inquiry in redefining theoretical and methodological approaches, yet ethnicity remains ill-defined in most works.[62]

The lack of a clear definition has not prevented researchers from using this concept. Ethnicity has been regarded as a fundamental source of meaning and recognition (Castells 1997:53). There is a tendency to equate ethnicity with culture (e.g. Erdmans 1995) regardless of the fact that Freedman (1975:61) had argued much earlier that ethnicity has nothing to do with cultural differentiation although often associated as such.

Many anthropologists still use (or have to use) the concept of ethnicity, whether to describe the quality of groups or as an analytical tool[63], or "simply as an identifying label" (Banks 1996:10), or because of its heuristic significance in analysing complex societies (A. Cohen 1974a: xxi). Brackette Williams (1989:404) critically points out that ethnicity is "a study of what anthropological observers thought people were actually doing, no matter what people themselves thought they were doing." Williams' insight captures the nature of the concept's strategic significance in anthropological study. Inevitably, ethnicity became overused or simply not very well fashioned (Banks, 1996:9) in intellectual literature to such an extent that ethnicity is labelled as an anthropological construction, and there are calls

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[62] According to Wsevolod W. Isijiw's study on the definitions of ethnicity, 52 out of the 65 researchers under scrutiny had no explicit definition of ethnicity at all (1974 quote from Isaacs 1975:221). For a list of definitions of this term by different authors, see Banks (1996: 4-6). For theoretical analyses, see Williams (1989), Sokolvski and Tishkov (2002[1996]), Cerulo (1997). For ethnographic examples, see Lemoine (1989), Wu (1989), Keyes (1995, 2000).

[63]Locals, especially local elites as described in Chapter three, are also using it to pursuit their goals. A. P. Cohen (1994a&b) calls on researchers to pay attention to individual's self consciousness as a major locus in the study of one's social identity.

to abandon the term altogether (Banks1996:44). Fabian (1991: xiv) points out that the concept actually creates distance and otherness rather than understanding.

This thesis proposes to look beyond ethnicity and focuses on ethnic identity and the *minzu* concept in the context of China, not because it is "too far from common speech" (Freedman 1975:65) but because it is one of those inadequate "short-cut concepts" (Amit 2002) that anthropology created to theorise the remote 'Other'. Ethnicity, as a concept is shallow and empty.

1.5 Methodologies

This study has benefited tremendously from many traditional single-village-based studies in China. Yet not until after I was in the field did I realise that a single village study would miss the complexity of Bai identity building. Given the long history and complex composition of the Bai population, a single case study could not provide an adequate basis for understanding the current Bai. It seemed awkward to confine my research to one particular village because each village had close ties with other villages in terms of annual rituals and social events. When it came to local deity worship (see Chapters Five and Six), it was common to find more than one local deity in one village temple or several villages worshipping the same deity. Informants' suggestions guided my multiple visits within Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP) and allowed me to see the limited value of single village research on the topic. So I decided to conduct multi-sited regional research and came to see the implicit constructive nature at work in local people's lives, and the connections

and disconnections, continuity and discontinuity between Bai people's identities and their multiple claimed sources.

I have made multiple visits, over an extended period of time of more than five years (since I started to study the Bai) to a number of rural and township Bai communities. Each visit built upon what was previously learned, guided by what was suggested or discovered in the previous field visits. Some visits were for specific purposes such as attending annual festivals, weddings or funerals.

Multiple fieldwork visits have advantages and disadvantages. The fieldwork visits had a natural rhythm and a flexible working schedule. Knowing that I would return again to the field or be able to go to another village, I felt quite relaxed rather than desperately compelled to squeeze out information from any single interview or field visit (also see Siu 1983). Each visit refreshed myself and my informants. I found that follow-up visits to a particular site were always fruitful and necessary in clarifying blind spots.

Multiple visits also had disadvantages. Short-term stay often did not allow me to establish in-depth relationships with as many locals as I had hoped. Multiple visits duplicated my task of explaining my research to interviewees, and involved more time to make myself acceptable to the community. Suspicions and misunderstandings were common, especially under the market economy; cheaters from urban areas were common in the countryside. Even those with whom I spent much time and energy building up trust found it difficult to understand why an urbanite would give up 'modern' urban life and come all the way to take part in rural daily life for non-monetary ends.

Encountering difficulties common to anthropologists but unique from person to person,[64] I cast my net wide, kept explaining research ethics in ways that the local people could understand, and kept socialising with anyone who was happy to share their opinions and experiences with me. I was aware that in spite of their friendliness and hospitality, villagers who were happy to be interviewed did so with reservations. There were certain points where I could not go deeper. Some questions could be openly discussed with some people, but were embarrassing to others. And I was aware that leaving fieldwork sites itself is an inevitable betrayal to their trust and expectations. I tried to minimise such 'betrayal' by sending seasonal greetings to major interviewees and responding to their occasional requests promptly.

I realised in the end that being a local Han woman was neither a privileged nor disadvantaged position in understanding the Bai. In-depth interviews were conducted in local Yunnan dialect which did not create much inconvenience to most of my interviewees because most of my in-depth interviewees were bilingual except for a few senior women.[65] Under such circumstances, a member from the family or village was often invited as an interpreter to facilitate interviews. I was also interested in finding out how they expressed ethnic identity in Han dialect when spoken language has been such a marker of Bai ethnicity in people's daily interactions since C. P. Fitzgerald's (1941) day.

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[64] For more accounts, see Anne F. Thurston & Burton Pasternak (1983) ed. *The Social Sciences and Fieldwork in China: Views from the Field*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

[65] Also see Wu (1989, 1990, 1994[1991]) and Blum (1994:235) for their reports of widespread bilingual ability among the Bai.

I asked a similar set of semi-structured and open questions of most of my informants, which was intended to solicit different opinions and ideas about the same topic. Most interviews were conducted on an unstructured basis and on informal occasions. Those casual conversations were as important as formal interviews in demonstrating what it meant to be Bai. More often than not, the mere mention of my research topic would elicit great passion and pride. One informant said to me: "we welcome people like you [non-Bai] to come to study us, the Bai, and we hope more people would know more about us" and this is a common view. After asking for oral permission, I taped the songs they sang and took photos of them on various occasions. Unless specified, all photos are taken by myself, and all quotes are from my fieldwork notes under pseudonyms. I frequently quote from my field notes, not only to support my arguments, but also to call attention to the ethnographic process and the contexts in which data was collected.

Since the pan-Bai category was already demarcated officially, well implemented and accepted, I started with it as a category both in a real and analytical sense. This does not mean I was ready to accept the extant Bai category. In terms of time span, this thesis had to start from, but definitely not limit itself to, the post-NECP dividing line. Considering all the different labels used for the people under study in history, I used 'Bai' and 'predecessors of the Bai' to refer to the post- and pre-NECP communities.

In most cases, "Bai identity" is discussed here in its plural and singular forms. The plural form refers to the varieties of different identities which people may adopt as Bai and the Bai people's self-felt identities in different degrees. The singular form

is capitalised, and refers either to the group identity as projected by the Bai as a sort of collective 'one true self', or the collective Bai Identity assumed by, and common in the discourse of, outsiders. Both forms can be at an individual level and a collective one. I noticed that the collective Bai Identity was a conscious model (Levi-Strauss 1963: 281) which they used to explain and justify their behaviour, and there were actually many such conscious models. By Bai villages or Bai communities, I mean villages or communities in which the majority of the population are Bai.

One question often came up: whether individuals were speaking for themselves or at a collective level, or both. My short answer is: it is hard to distinguish. But one thing is certain, as illustrated through the four episodes at the beginning of this thesis: a strong sense of being Bai was often reiterated. To an outsider, Bai ethnicity may exist merely at a symbolic level, but to my informants it is part of their daily life: in the ways they eat and dress, the houses they dwell in, and the deities they worship.

My writing is based on first-hand field data that I collected from a number of villages in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture which I have visited since 1999. I had to use such general terms as 'religion', 'ethnic groups', 'east', 'west,' the 'Bai', 'Han' and 'Yi' as basic entities to ground my study. I was trying to experience, not only merely to participate and observe, as much as possible and to represent their acting-out of self-ascribed Bai identities rather than to present the full range of Bai social life. I have also drawn heavily on documentary sources, including previous studies done by both Chinese and international, Bai and non-Bai researchers.

As a PhD candidate studying China *minzu* and writing in English, I am, to various degrees, both an 'insider' and 'outsider', if not 'native' enough. The state, the people under study and the English scholarship hold *minzu*, ethnic group, its accountability and boundaries differently. And I intended to write "counternarratives" (Duara 1995:66) to portray a fuller picture of the Bai, which made it impossible to avoid the issue of positionality.

Standing on the edge/boundary between insider and outsider, I found my "halfie" (Abu-Lughod 1991) status brought me more advantages than disadvantages. The ambiguity of my position was useful in negotiating issues of positionality. Writing 'for' and speaking 'from' where I come from, my halfie position prevents me from thinking or writing my research subjects as the Other. Sometimes, this halfie position enabled me to benefit from both ends, rather than lingering on the reductionist question of "who has the right to speak?" I do not justify a researcher's domination in the representation of research subjects, nor do I justify 'ethnic scepticism', which means, in this case, that only Chinese or Chinese ethnic people have the right to speak.[66] I agree that "the anthropologist's identity may not be an overwhelmingly relevant criterion of a work's value." (Blum 2006:81) This is not a matter of who the researcher is, but how he/she approaches the issue and represents it.

I was aware of the importance of my own voice and my interactions with both Chinese and English literature. As a non-Bai Chinese, I can write about the Bai in a way that the Bai and non-Chinese cannot, even though it is from a perspective unavoidably coloured by my own social, personal and professional experiences.

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[66] I coin this term from Susan Dordo's "gender scepticism" (1994:458)) that only Chinese or Chinese *minzu* have the right to speak.

There are a lot of "I"s in the thesis which are not for "concentrating authority in my own words, interpretations and perspectives"(Wilson1995:191), but to distinguish *my* understanding or *my* position from that of my informants, and to fully present myself, as Wallman (2002) recognizes, as one of the actors on the stage. And I was trying to balance *my* story and *theirs* in dialogue with the English scholarship. In so doing, I also try to avoid only presenting positive aspects for foreign readership. If this thesis gives such an impression, this is mainly because the Bai people are different, in terms of their identification and social relations with the state, from other ethnic minorities that frequently appear in English literature.

In questioning the colonialism in research and representation that has been well debated in anthropology and postmodernism, I handled directly issues of voice and authority by trying to bring out those of the Bai elite, who have often been ignored, if not missed altogether, in the English literature. I took seriously the publications of those well-educated and non-educated Bai individuals so as to expose their voices to English readership. It should be pointed out that individuals vary and what I describe here does not necessarily apply to all members of the group. Nor do I claim to represent Chinese perspectives in a literal sense.

To some degree, writing up is less an issue of what the reality is but how it can be presented and communicated to an English readership. I use the term 'identity' as a cover label for the positional definitions of social actors. All I have tried to represent is how those different participants have taken up meanings from, or given meanings to, the Bai category; in this I agree with Hall (1997) that taking up meanings is as important as putting into meanings in this process. There is no

singular, fixed and unchanging identity; nor such a meaning. Every event of agency constitutes and reproduces an actor's identity in a certain social structure.

The thesis is history-based. I maintain that it is impossible to examine ethnic groups and ethnic identities without going into certain parts of the history of the people under study. One's ethnic identity comes from what one was in a non-primordialist sense. However, there is not a chapter on history in this thesis because history suffuses every chapter.

This thesis argues against treating history in a unilinear way. History itself is a construction, which is evident in the chapter on Bai studies by the Bai. Being a past-oriented form of identity (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1995), Bai Identity and Bai identities are in fact present-based. History was one of the significant sources that the Chinese ethnologists relied on during the NECP, and was what the Bai have drawn on frequently to fill up their 'vessel' (Barth 1969), 'tool-kit' (Swindler 1986) or 'shopping cart' (Negel 1994) today. Local history and Bai identities have been intricately linked. Bai identities have arisen in the interplay between local history, the state and the people. The constant 'play' of history has been grounded in local history studies and various oral accounts of local events or places. There were, and still are, a number of presumed 'true' histories which have their material and symbolic effects in the present despite constant transformations and social changes.

Moreover, relying on history did not mean that I was taking historical documents for granted as some historians seem to have been doing. I am aware that studies of the Bai from a historical perspective are inevitably constrained by the validity and biases of historical documents as discussed in Chapter Three. Yet,

despite the notorious inaccuracy, prejudice and biases in historical documents, some agree in the main with indigenous history.[67] Whether this was a result of Hanisation was not important; the important thing was, there was something there we could not ignore. To minimise such constraints, this thesis has focused on the light that these documents shed in terms of the external identification of the Bai. For instance, Nanzhao history is brought up in the thesis because it has been used as a source of identification, rather than for the sake of seeking a 'true' history.[68]

It was from such historical documents that I found glimpses of how the people under study were described under an imperial pen. I emphasise that history was constrained by the space and time in which it was written. Meanings of ethnic group and identity can change from time to time, and people's identifications are shaped in part by the histories written of them. Yet people's subjective identity and the very act/action of identification have often remained unchanged. It is in this direction that I am pressing, not for any political ends or exclusive concerns for a particular theoretical explanation, but for what had happened before (to a certain extent) and after the Bai label was demarcated.

I have not attempted anything like a complete, well-rounded ethnography, but have tried to concentrate on those aspects of daily life and local practices that most influenced or represented Bai identities. In most cases, doing fieldwork geographically 'at home' did not ensure that locals took me as culturally/ethnically

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[67] Such as records in the Naxi pictographic texts , see McKahnn (1998)

[68] Historians point out that the study of Nanzhao kingdom was actually a study of Tang periphery due to lack of Nanzhao records (Lien 2003:4). And I understand it was the biased and Han-centric literati tradition that made Yang Chengzhi call on to abandon our understanding of ethnic groups based on provincial, prefectural and county gazetteers (from Mullaney 2004b:216).

'native.' Nonetheless, I deliberately posed myself as a student, trying to understand Bai culture and their daily life experience. People were highly self-motivated to produce evidence of Bai-ness and its uniqueness, and quick to point out what was not Bai. Sometimes, such reactions/responses were performed particularly in front of me to draw boundaries, precisely because I am not a member of the Bai.

Dali, the prefecture and the Ancient Town

The town and villages where I did my fieldwork cannot be conceived of as an ideal traditional anthropology fieldwork site, because each site has been entangled in local and even global, continuity and dramatic changes. My multi-sited visits provided me with stimulation and ideas, intensity and complexity that exceed the bounds of villages and what the traditional single-sited unit can accommodate. The following section introduces Dali as the current prefecture capital and the ancient town of Dali in order to locate where my research was conducted. The villages where I collected my ethnographic data are shown in the map (see Map 2. p.xv), on which my fieldwork trail is dotted. From 1999, I went to Dali very year and had visited different villages many times for different lengths of stay.

The current Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP), established in 1956, is in the west of Yunnan Province. The capital city of the DBAP is Dali, which consists of two parts: Xiaguan and the Ancient Town of Dali. Dali is about 400 km away from the nearest metropolitan centre, Kunming. So the short form "Dali" is often used to refer both to the DBAP or the Ancient Town of Dali in daily conversation. Dali was also spelt as Ta Li or Ta-li in the older English literature. The Chinese word "Dali",

meaning "Great Principles", was taken as the name of the Ancient Town by the founder of Nanzhao Kingdom, Piluoge, in 746 AD (Fitzgerald, 1941:69). Since then the ancient town of Dali has been given many different names and was recorded as Yieyu County in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). The Ancient Town resumed the name Dali in 1913 and has kept this name ever since. As mentioned before, as a political and military strategic interchange leading to the west (the Burma Road) and northwest (to Tibet), Dali is historically well-known, and was a centre of political power in southwest China from the 8th century to the 13th century.

1. 6 Thesis outline

This thesis is organised to reflect the continuum of overt, conscious and unconscious construction of Bai identities and their reconstitution in social practices. A theme that underlies all chapters is: how has a unifying Bai Identity been defined by different actors? What is the situation within the clear-cut state demarcation?

Chapter One has given some general information and historical background of the Bai people, including why I chose this topic and how I approached my research. Chapter Two addresses the theories relevant to my research topic and the theoretical concerns of this thesis. I argue that available concepts may be problematic if not redefined from a Chinese perspective. Chinese *minzu* groups do exist in different ways from ethnic groups defined in early anthropological scholarship. By attending to the five-decade discussion on the origins of the Bai, local history and Bai

[69] Between 746 AD and 1913, the ancient town was given many different names.

language by Bai elite, Chapter Three will demonstrate how the Bai elite constructed "Bai" features to distinguish them from Han, Yi and Dai in their study of Bai history and culture. Chapter Four explores how time division (after/before the NECP), memories of Han ancestry, recent history, geographic location, spoken language and ancestor-worship can become "a site of identification" (Antze and Lambek 1996) in defining what degree of Bai-ness one possesses. Here native-place identity is subsumed under the Bai category, and people are happy to adopt the category simply because the Bai label is politically correct and handy to mark and make differences. Memories are appropriated and relocated to back up the subjective identification with the state-defined group label.

Chapter Five examines religious practices and reveals how people negotiate Bai identities through the medium of Bai and non-Bai deities, and justify their religious activities in terms of their desired meanings. Chapter six is located in a social event --- *gua sa la*, another one of the overlapping and interlocking arenas. Chapter Six shows how Bai identities can be found in state symbols that have been transformed into local versions. This is also true the other way round. Local symbols have been incorporated into state discourse. Thus a balance is achieved between the state and society where both parties can accept the same structure of symbolism but with different meanings.

Chapter Seven shows how Bai ethnicity is advocated as a product loaded with potential economic values in the tourist market. Tourist promotions help envisage and enhance a unified Bai Identity, and "commerce of authenticity" (Oakes 1998). Different forms of ethnicity and artefacts promoted in the tourist market have not

drowned out the sense of being Bai. Chapter Eight presents the general findings from my research. Bai identities are quite diffused and can be found in a complex and multidimensional arena. I return to the theoretical concerns I raised in Chapter Two and readdress some of my critiques of Chinese and Western anthropological approaches. I conclude that Bai identities are "both an act and a concept" Blum 1994:34).

This thesis provides several contexts to capture the relational characteristics and situational dependency of Bai identities. Hopefully the thesis will help readers understand moments of unity and diversity in a rapidly changing Chinese society. I argue that it is wrong to consider human actions as merely structurally determined. As Ortner (1984:144) points out, human actions are not determined by a set of cultural features alone (e.g. Shih 2002) but also by social relationships.

I am fully aware that individual consciousness, responses to the official label, and social relations may vary from one person to another and one place to another, so that this thesis can only cover then and there within a specified time and space.

Tables for chapter one

Table 1: Bai Population in China, Yunnan province and Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP)

National	Yunnan Province	DBAP*
1,858,063	1,503,783	1,049,300
		33.24 % of the total prefecture population

Sources: *2000 Yunnan Provincial Population Census*, Kunming: Yunnan Ethnic Minority Press, 2003.
*Sources:www.dali.gov.cn (accessed 2002/04/10)

Table 2: Population of Dali in Ming dynasty (abstracted from Lee 1982)

Registered Population in Ming Dynasty in Dali (Lee 1982:718)

Year	1502	1576	1625
Population	160,602	268,715	241,716

The Rise of Population in Taihe (old name for Dali) (Lee 1982:719)

Year	1522	1576	1622
Population	54,782	52,824	96,734

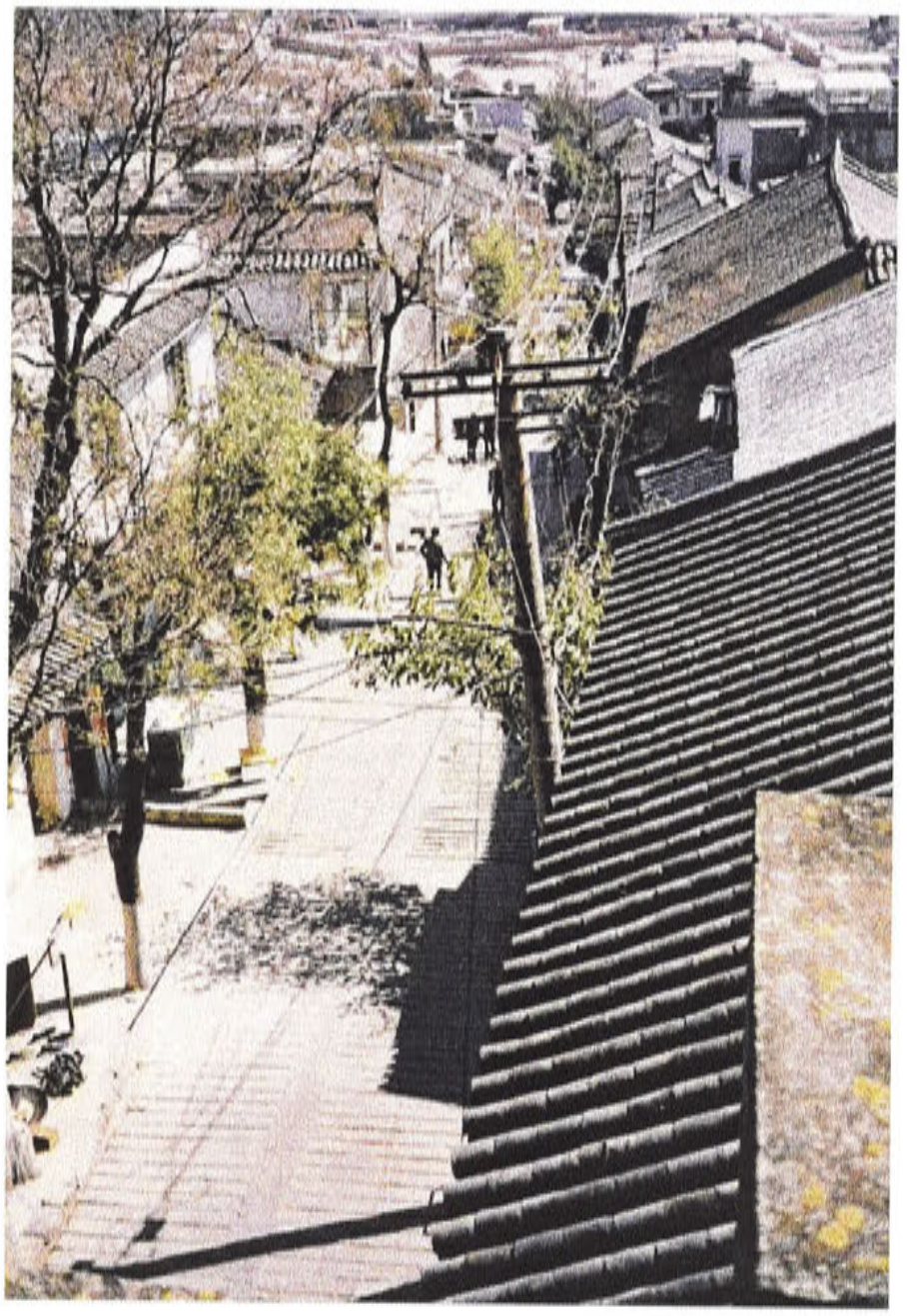
Table 3: National Classification Project in China (55 + 1)

Year	Numbers	Ethnic Group Names
1950-54	38	Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uygur, Miao, Yi, Korean, Manchu, Yao, Li, Gaoshan. Zhuang, Bouyei, Dong, **Bai**, Kazak, Hani, Dai, Lisu, Dongxiang, Naxi, Lahu, Shui, Jingpo, Wa, Kirgiz, Tu, Tajik, Ozbek, Tartar, Ewenki, Bonan, Qiang, Salar, Russian, Xibe, Yugur, Oroqen.
1954-78	16	Tujia, She, Daur, Gelo, Bulang, Mulam, A'chang, Pumi, Nu, Benglong (De'ang), Jing, Drung, Hezhe, Moinba, Maonan, Lhoba
1979 n 1982	1	Jinuo,

Source: http;//www.ccnt.com.cn/nation/index2.htm. accessed 2006-12-20.

Chapter Two

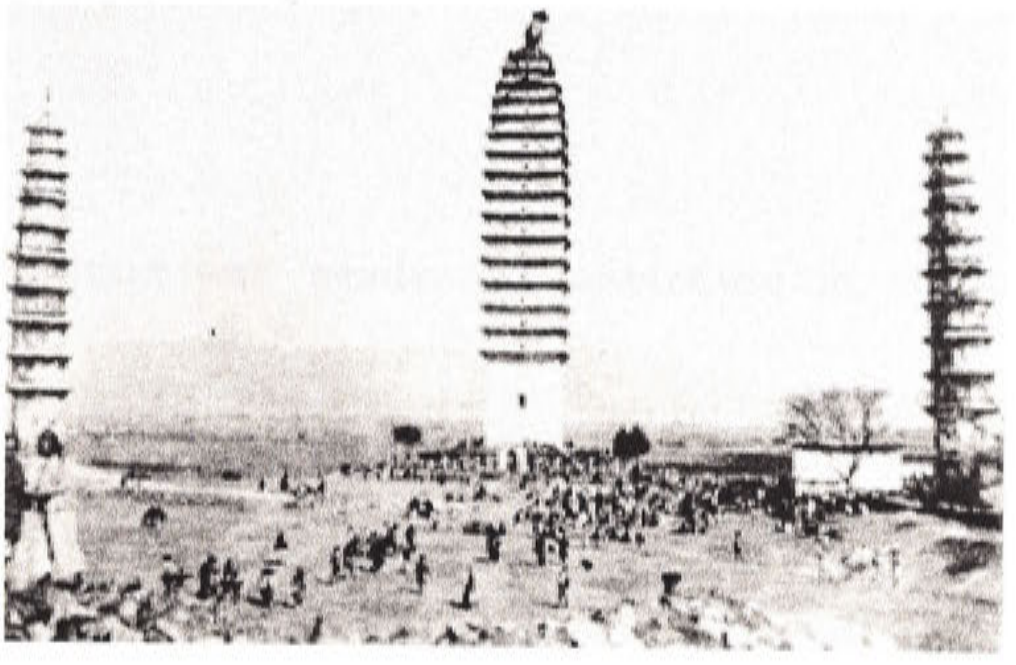
The Making of *Minzu* and its Conceptual Implications



Ill. 5: View from Dragonhead Gate. Xiaguan. 2004.

Ill. 6: Cangshan and Erhai. 2004.

Ill. 7: The Three Pagodas. 2005.



Ill. 8: The Three Pagodas in late Qing Dynasty. http://www.yndaily.com/html/ accessed Mar. 22, 2004.

Chapter Two

The Making of *Minzu* and its Conceptual Implications

The previous chapter discussed the topic of who launched the NECP and when it happened. This chapter starts with why and how the NECP was carried out, how Chinese fieldworkers reflected on it and how Western anthropologists responded to it. I maintain that it is impossible to ignore the NECP when we look at any *minzu* in China, because current notions of being *minzu*, are defined in the terms set during the NECP. But being *minzu* did not start there, nor does it end there. Following the trail opened up by a few anthropologists (e.g. Harrell, Schein, Blum and Gladney), this chapter intends to explore what the state-defined *minzu* categories mean to different stakeholders and how to understand the Bai (*Baizu*). I argue that those designated as Bai have injected a strong and continuous breath of life into the externally defined *minzu* category, and made it meaningful both to themselves and to outsiders.

2.1 Official representation and academic understanding of the NECP

2.1.1 Why and how

As mentioned in chapter one, the NECP started as a "state project of nation building" (Harrell 1995c:112) in formulating the official 55 ethnic minority groups in

China. It met three needs at the time: the administrative needs of the new nation-state, the need of the new ruling party to fulfil earlier promises made to non-Han peoples, and the need to meet the demands of these non-Han peoples. Diverse *minzu* groups would be a resource to the newly established state because of the richness that different groups could provide for nation building and national development.

Right after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the state had no idea of the number and location of ethnic groups (Fei 1980, 1981). There was "an initial faith in the possibility of 'scientifically' isolating bounded and discrete cultures" (Tapp 2002:68). Standardising the categories of a diverse range of peoples was assumed as a must, and was never questioned by Chinese. The question was how to standardise the loose categories passed on for centuries, in the former Soviet way, or in a specifically Chinese way?

In addition, the new ruling party, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), had promised equal status to non-Han peoples during the Long March (1934-1936)[1] when the then-weak CCP army was fighting against the Guomingdang nationalist regime. The promise became crucial when the CCP was sandwiched between the invading Japanese and the nationalist armies after the Long March. When the new Constitution (1954) granted equal status to people from any ethnic background for the first time in Chinese history, those who felt they had suffered oppression, either from Han landlords or local ethnic headsmen, stood up and exceeded 400 groups in

[1] The Red Army passed through fourteen provinces including areas in Yunnan inhabited by ethnic minorities. Achieving ethnic equality was one of the goals to enlist the support of ethnic peoples to overthrow the nationalist (*Kuomintang*) rule and unify the nation against outsiders (also see Xu Jieshun 2004, Gladney 2004:16, 163-64). The promise of equality fits well into the Marxist ideology that all ethnic minorities are conceived as the oppressed people.

number (Fei 1980, 1981; Huang Guangxue 1995; Hao Shiyuan 1999). Many non-Han intellectuals and elites embraced the NECP due to the chronic discrimination against and maltreatment of non-Hans long before the CCP came into power.[2]

To find out who the peripheral peoples were and to accomplish their earlier promises, the state followed a traditional Confucian practice: to rectify names (*zhengming*). In this case, this involves granting groups of people accredited labels by the state. Naming the 'Other,' to put it in a Confucian way (see Anagnost 1994:240-244, Gladney 1994), was carried out at a legislative level. Despite the fact that the identification of the central Self (Han Chinese) in relation to the peripheral Other (non-Han Chinese) could be dated back to the third century BC in China,[3] the symbolism of rectifying names had changed over time. Although such formal recognition by the state was viewed as a sign of equality from the perspectives of the subjects, it has been criticised as an objectification of the Other in much English scholarship (e.g. Gladney 2004). Here it suffices to point out that the NECP fieldworkers at that time had their own personal experiences different from what many current Western researchers can imagine or understand.[4] When Fei (1981:15)

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[2] See Fei (1981:24) for a list of the more recent maltreatment the Nationalist regime and the invading Japanese of ethnic minorities in the 1930s and 1940s. Non-Han elites from some groups had longed for formally rectified names from the central state, which is well illustrated by Cheung (2003) for the Miao case and self-evident by the number of self-proposed groups. There is no need for the state to "appropriate[d] the traditional role of the literatus in determining the correct names of things" as Gladney (1994:269) observes, because the state has the power and authority in the mindset of Chinese.

[3] See Ma Changshou (1991[1936]), Wang Wenguang (1995b) and Ma Rong (2001). Zeng Daiwei et al (2004) discovered that from unearthed Han dynasty tombs, one of the bamboo-books recorded a court-case dated in 196BC and lenient convictions applied to ethnic minorities in southern China.

[4] According to Fei (1999:1), when he went to Dali to participate in the inauguration of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP), he was approached by "many ethnic minority representatives who

compared his NECP investigation experience with his earlier fieldwork prior to 1949, he remarked how much he was "warmly received" during the NECP investigation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the basic principle of NECP was Stalin's four criteria, yet the reality was much more complicated than what Stalin set out and the Chinese researchers could manage. The process was, to a certain degree, both subjective and objective. It was carried out by the people involved (usually their local elites) and the state ethnographers, who mostly relied on descent-based data, linguistic analysis, religious practices, archives and meetings. Collective requests were given priority (Fei 1980, Shi Lianzhu 1995a:109, also see Harrell 1990a, 1995c, 2001a). Previously-existing categories were also seriously taken into consideration, which was seen as a sign of respect for historical 'facts'.[5] Some categories were clear-cut. Most significantly, regardless of the lexical genealogy of each *minzu* category and its political implication at that time, former derogatory labels were changed, although the validity and credibility of history books and gazetteers were seldom openly questioned.

Eventually, 55 out of the more than 400 self-proposed groups obtained official ethnic titles (see Table 3). Many of the proposed 400-plus self-appellations were origin names (e.g. *Nanjing ren*, people from Nanjing) and lineage surnames (e.g.

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requested an investigation on the social historical conditions of them." And as one of the fieldwork participants recalled to me: "People were just so excited, they were overwhelmed to see us and exclaimed 'Chairman Mao has sent people to visit us!' And they poured out everything without any reservation." (personal communication in 1997).

[5] The most recent fieldwork had been done in the late 1930s and early 1940s when the Japanese invasion forced scholars and university students to Kunming, southwest of China. During this period, fieldwork was carried out in northwest, southwest and southern China (see Wang Jianmin 1997:223-242, 250-56). No nationwide classification was carried out at this stage.

caijia, the Cai lineage)[6] and so their requests were denied. So there is no reason to assume that the 400-plus represented an equivalent number of different ethnic groups.

Stalin's (1953) four 'objective' criteria were obviously subjected to "practical adaptations" (Fei 1980, 1981; Huang Guangxue 1995; Hao Shiyuan 1999). Different criteria were prioritised for different peoples according to the most salient (meaning observable) practices. For instance, in categorizing the Hui, who did not have a common language or locality, their religious practice of Islam became the decisive factor.[7] For the widely dispersed Yi, their origin stories and animist beliefs played a major role.[8] As a result, speakers of different languages were lumped under one category (e.g. the Yi), while mutually intelligible speakers became the basis for other groups (e.g. Lisu, Lahu, etc.). One historically existing group could be divided into two separate categories, for instance, the Pumi in Yunnan and the Tibetans in Sichuan (see Harrell 1996b, 2001b:193-215), the Nu and Dulong (see Gros 2004) or the Zhuang in Guangxi and Buyi in Guizhou. Although constitutional equality and affirmative action covered every *minzu* category, improperly grouped people may or may not be happy with their classification for different reasons.[9] For instance, under the pan-Yi category, "ethnic identity is likely to be a matter of dispute" and "an

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[6] See Fei (1980), Shi Lianzhu (1995a:109). These names can still be found in county level ethnographic records, see Ding Shiliang et al. (1991:725-868).

[7] According to Gladney (1996, 2004), the Hui in Quanzhou are not religiously conformist to most other Hui in China.

[8] See Fei (1980, 1989), Lin Yaohua (1984), Huang Shuping (1989), Huang Guangxue (1995), and Hao Shiyuan (1999) for detail. Also see Harrell (1990a, 1995c) for the complexity and different levels of acceptance of and opposition to the state category among the subgroups of the Yi.

[9] The Pumi seem to be happy (Harrell 1996b), so are the Nu and Dulong. But the Mosuo are not happy to be in the Naxi (see McKhann 1995), nor the Shuitian in the pan-Yi category (see Harrell 2001b), nor Ge in the Miao.

identity is accepted if it does not contradict either strong primordial sentiments or cogent instrumentalist logics" (Harrell 1990a:545-46). Among the groups that were not happy to be under one umbrella category (see McKhann 1995 for the Mosuo, Harrell 2001b:216-62 for the Naze), the Jinuo, formally under the pan-Yi, successfully secured a separate status in 1979 (see Du Yüting 1997, 1998).

Groups "virtually identical with the Han" (such as the "Manchus, Zhuang and some Bai," see Blum 1994:60), and others who had 'lost' their cultural heritage (such as the Tujia (see Peng Jikuan 1995), Gelao and She (see Shi Lianzhu 1995c)),[10] were nonetheless granted separate *minzu* status. In addition, as McKhann (1998) shows, sometimes, an evolutionary ideology in accordance with the Morgan-Engels model determined the relationship between group and subgroup. For instance, as a subgroup of the Naxi, the Mosuo represent what it is supposed the Naxi once were.

The official ending of the recognition of more numbers of *minzu* under the NECP in 1983 was due to the an *ad hoc* boundary-crossing of quite a number of individuals and groups,[11] to an evolutionist ideology which assumed that *minzu* would emerge, flourish and eventually disappear, and to administrative concerns. The official termination stopped approving more claims but has not frozen *minzu* boundaries, judging from the drastic population growth in censuses among some

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[10] In this case, if they were told who they were, it must have been done through a long process in history, rather than merely being turned on during the NECP.

[11]Boundary crossing occurred in all directions: between and within groups. The NECP seems to have resulted in people experiencing "the classic symptoms of liminality" (Ortner 1984:127): confusion of categories, expressions of chaos and anti-structure (in terms of the fluid categories that had existed). For a detailed account of the NECP mainly by those participant fieldworkers, see the volumes edited by Huang Guangxue (1995) and Hao Shiyuan (1999). In the graph, there is a steady rise in the population of ethnic groups between 1964 and 1982.

groups caused mainly by those designated as Han claiming *minzu* status.[12] Although the Hakka,[13] or Cantonese, or Shanghainese seem more different from the Han than many official ethnic minority groups in the eyes of non-Chinese, these people did not request ethnic minority status and have never identified themselves as forming a *minzu* group, although this issue of cultural difference has been repeatedly raised in Western research (e.g. Harrell 1990b, Brown 2004:7, Gladney 2004, Heberer 1989:8).

Regional difference is well known and recognised even among ordinary Chinese citizens. Similarly, other variations among the Han based on native-places, education levels, professions and even religious practices were not under consideration as *minzu* categories because such variations have rarely been the cause of questions by the people involved or by the state in the 1950s. The *minzu* category is just one of various social classifications. Some researchers argue that the *minzu* category is a mechanism that denies all other social differences due to the positive discrimination towards ethnic minorities in China (e.g. Lemoine 2005). This argument may seem true from an etic perspective. But it would be quite impossible for the Hakka, Cantonese or Shanghainese to claim *minzu* status even given the attractions of state affirmative action.

According to my interviews with various individuals during my fieldwork in Dali between 1999 and 2004, they all accepted that all *minzu* identities are part of Chinese national identity. At an individual level, people could, and still can, request a

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[12] Between 1982 and 1990, the Han population grew by a total of 10%, the minority population grew 35% overall. Muslim grew by 30%-40%, the Manchu grew by a total of 128% (228% in page 175), the Gelao grew 714% in eight short years, the population of Tujia increased from 2.8 million in 1982 to 5.7million in 1990 (p.175) (Gladney 2004:20).

[13] See Peng Zhaorong (2001) and Zhou Daming (2005) for the subjective identification of Hakka.

minzu status based on the *minzu* status of one of the parents if he/she has a mixed ancestry. Selecting one's *minzu* identity from either parent has been culturally and constitutionally acceptable, and it is this which largely accounts for the rapid growth in the ethnic minority population shown in censuses after 1982, as almost all accounts point out (e.g. Harrell 1990a, 1996a, 2001a; Gladney 2004).

Due to the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), it was not until the 1980s that Chinese ethnographers got a chance to look back at the *minzu* categories they devised in the 1950s. Understanding the rationale of the NECP and the social contexts of China in the 1950s,[14] the Chinese ethnographers (cadres and scholarly-officials) accepted it as de facto for one reason or another. Their reflections have been explanatory rather than critical.[15] Given that Stalin's four criteria were the only politically correct guidelines, none of them have tried to deny the constraints of political ideology or deny the inaccuracies which often occurred in applying Stalin's criteria (1953), simply because these constraints and problems were the *then reality* and *part* of the NECP. The ethnographers of that time had to bridge the gap between meeting political requirements and sorting out the heterogeneous reality that was impossible to neatly fit into the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theoretical framework. They have now emphasised that the basic principle followed in the NECP was *ming cong zhuren*

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[14] Also see Li Shaoming (2002). For instance, as insiders of the Chinese cultural-political system, none of them would ever dispute the Dulong label, which was granted when one of the Dulong representatives made the request directly to the late first premier of China, Zhou Enlai. Chinese ethnographers were also aware that it is inappropriate to mark the Dulong off from the Nu and their neighbour(s) because these people were ethnically inseparable historically, which also becomes one of the many reasons that have attracted Western criticism.

[15] Except Huang Shuping (1989) who calls on her Chinese colleagues to continue theoretical inquires in ethnological studies.

(names follow the people's will) (Fei 1980/1, Shi Lianzhu 1995a:109, Du Yüting 1997). All the Chinese fieldworkers emphasise that they tried their best to conform to the strong appeals from the people,[16] even though the latter may well have been local elites.

In some cases, the 'loss' of ethnic distinctiveness by elites was reckoned to be a result of discrimination and oppression from the ruling class which included non-Han rulers. Most importantly, the requests of the non-Han elites and the 'rectification of names' tradition, influenced the Chinese ethnographers. It seems never to have occurred to them that the state-defined categories might later become major sources of strong ethnic identifications, nor did they reflect much about the nature of the negotiations they engaged in at the local level (also see Blum 2002). Few would have expected or comprehended why many Western anthropologists would find it so difficult to understand the NECP and to recognise the validity of the NECP for decades on end, however, reasonable their criticisms may appear from a Western perspective.[17]

The NECP not only seems to have frozen up ethnic groups that had been in fluidity, but also ended up engendering and heightening people's self-awareness (see Harrell 1995a). To members of any group, the NECP offers more than official recognition and equal rights, post-NECP categories have become handy tools to combat socio-political changes. Most importantly, the NECP provided a basis for

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[16] See Fei (1980), Lin Yaohua (1984), Huang Shuping (1989), Huang Guangxue (1995) and Hao Shiyuan (1999).

[17] See Susan Blum (2002) for the totally different stances between Western-trained scholars and Chinese scholars.

subsequent efforts to fill the empty *minzu* categories with whatever people assume 'ethnic' within a traditionally and politically acceptable framework.

The NECP has not only been important to the state and the people involved, it is also significant, in a theoretical sense, to anthropologists. The implementations of the project and its theoretical implications have provided ideal case studies for intellectual, political and social critiques in a post-colonial and post-modern era.[18] Early English-language publications on the NECP have been *as* influential on English scholarship on Chinese *minzu as* the NECP has been on the Chinese population. Its role in shaping discussions of Chinese *minzu* has caught much attention. The arbitrary nature of the NECP, the role of the state and the political ideology have been critically engaged, but some of its conceptual implications have been scarcely mentioned in the English literature. The following section will introduce how Western researchers responded to the NECP before discussing the theoretical concerns of this thesis.

2.1.2 Western responses to the NECP

The arbitrary nature of the NECP has been, in the first place, difficult for Western researchers to accept. For example, anthropologists find people in the United States:

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[18] Few Western anthropologists, however, confront criticisms of the NECP provoked in Western literature, except for Susan Blum who directly mentions it but refrains herself from getting into it (1994:24) and Harrell's two articles in Chinese (2001c, 2002).

> are now struggling to establish a climate where assimilation is not assumed to be inevitable or desirable, while most people in China do not feel the same urgency to solve this problem.[19]
>
> Since *minzu* in China has so many differences from the ethnicity with which we Westerners, in the U.S., are familiar, we have spent decades puzzling over what this means. It is difficult to accept the fact that people in China *can accept* [emphasis added] what appears clearly to us as an unnatural, arbitrary system, acting very unanthropologically as we point out that these categories come from culture [*sic*] rather than nature (Blum 2002:1301-1302).

This is what I mean by the NECP challenging anthropological understandings. Strictly speaking, all the 55 ethnic minority groups were problematically categorized in one way or another either by Stalin's four criteria at that time or by ethnicity theories developed mainly in the West after the NECP was completed. After China opened its door to the outside world in 1978,[20] non-China based anthropologists started to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in China. Partly driven by the disciplinary focus on nationalism and ethnicity in the late 1980s and 1990s,[21] the NECP and the 55 *minzu* categories became a common topic. Western anthropologists have found it difficult to understand Chinese ethnographers' painstaking efforts to seal fluid and dynamic identities in boxes where boundaries might not have previously existed. Some of them have problematised the validity of the 55 post-NECP *minzu* categories

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[19] Blum (1994:21). See also Keyes 2002).

[20] Before 1978, Western scholarship on Chinese society had been conducted in regions away from mainland China such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and some southeast Asian communities.

[21] See Susan Blum (1994:20, 22; 2002) for a list of reasons. The fact that China is one of the few countries in the world that legally reified previously fluid categories also stimulated their research inspiration.

and the arbitrary classification process, "point[ing] out, over and over, its irrationality" (Blum 2002:1302) during an early stage of their career. A tendency towards overemphasis on the state and the focus on 'unofficial' groups gives the impression that these critiques are precisely ignoring or missing what has been intended in China, and taking little account of those who are comfortable with the state categorisation. Such research has projected a centre-periphery dichotomy they set out to deconstruct and has denied,[22] at a methodological level, the voices of local people who have been mobilising state categories in their own terms.

Besides the apparently irrational aspects of the NECP (see Keyes 2002), researchers have also noticed rational ones. Stevan Harrell (1995a) views it as a part of state apparatus, calling it a continuum of the Chinese "civilizing project;"[23] Susan Blum (2002) concludes that the NECP is just one form of the classification schemes like caste and moiety that people live with elsewhere. More importantly, Nicholas

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[22] Gladney's recent politically oriented publication (2004) questions dichotomies of majority/minority and centre/periphery. Ironically, the dislocation approach also presupposes the existence of such dichotomies.

[23] See McKhann (1998) for his criticism on such single-minded approaches that actually privileged the Han and the Han state culture, and reiterated and thus legitimated the NECP. But not all studies on the NECP are as deep and insightful. Fuelled with overflowing colonial criticism and Foucauldian discussion on the 'technology of power' (Keyes 1995), other researchers use selective case studies to attack the NECP for its colonialism, state control and political hegemony. The state-granted categories are their starting point "to explain all manner of social phenomena in a Chinese context" (Sigley 1998:314), and their research also ends there. A case in point is a recent volume on the 1954 NECP in Yunnan. This volume aims to explore "new trajectories" (Mullaney 2004a:202) in the study of the NECP and to define the nature of NECP both in theory (Caffrey 2004, Mullaney 2004b) and in practice (Gros 2004). Yet the whole volume is filled with Orientalist and post-colonialist terms such as "imperial", and 20 "colonial" or "colonialism" in Caffrey's article (2004). These terms also frequently appear in the writings of Gros (2004) and Mullaney (2004b) except for Colin Mackerras' (2004) masterly conclusive article in the same volume.

Tapp (2002:63) warns against "over-emphasising" the role of the state and draws attention to the role of the NECP in "elucidating vital local [sic] senses of difference." Nonetheless, both also make it clear at the same time that most Chinese, both Han and non-Han, are happy to accept the NECP. My impression when reading much of the 1980s-1990s English anthropological literature is that it usually tends to fall into two kinds. The first kind of critique focuses on the ways in which people have been classified, and points to the fact that principles of 'scientific' Marxism take no account of the consciousness of the people. The second kind of study focuses mostly on 'unofficial' groups, ethnicity outside the official groups, including those who were improperly classified but who may not feel at odds with the state categorisation. Harrell also studies "the Majority as Minority" (2001b:295-312) by which he means the Han living in *minzu* communities. In most cases, much depends on the writer's understanding of socio-historical situations of a particular community. My own research findings among the Bai seem to fit into neither of these two kinds of studies.

Recent researchers have given particular attention to the intermediary roles played by local elites and the negotiations at the local level, seeking alternative ways other than terms defined by the state to understand *minzu* in China. Harrell (1990a, 1995a, 1996b, 2001b) points out that the politically-correct categories do not float above society in a 'superstructure' (Starr 1992:154), but that the people are actively involved in giving a state-endorsed category a life of its own. He concludes that the relationship between rigid state categories and fluid local identities is a reciprocal one. On the one hand, state-defined categories have some effects on people's

consciousness,[24] and the NECP "can shape people's consciousness without being contested" (Harrell 1996b:294).

On the other hand, the NECP is not merely a top-down process (Harrell 2001b:42); state-defined categories "seem to have begun to develop" (Harrell 1989:196) into social reality (also see Lemoine 1989, Schein 1989, Gladney 1994, Tapp 1995 and Blum 2002). Gros (2004:292) notes that acceptance of official *minzu* labels also occurs to different degrees among different peoples, which he characterises as a "contractual acceptance" rather than an effect of the 'technology of power' of the state. Susan Blum (1994:15) points out that the fifty-five institutionalized *minzu* groups may be seen as "the imperfect realisation of the state's ideals." Most of these researchers note the circumstantial manoeuvring, but Harrell (1996a&b) and Gladney (2004:153) warn against any reductionist approach of taking these phenomena as mere utilitarianism. Tapp (2002) points out that the NECP enhanced the general groupings of old standing identities and wiped out the native subgroup ones. I maintain that it is reasonable to say that some local people "have helped to make real the very facts which they inaccurately described" as Hinton's study of the Karen suggested (1983:166), *and* the features which they *were* inaccurately ascribed during the NECP.

As will be discussed later, I argue that in a Chinese context, the dichotomy between the state and *minzu* itself is not that problematic, as most experienced researchers have shown, but the narrow focus on the state, unbalanced analysis and the essentialising of whatever is presumed to be at either end *are* problematic. In fact,

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[24] But no research has directly addressed why and how the efficacy has been achieved, and I suggest that this can be a good starting point to understand the *shaoshu minzu* in China.

many Western anthropologists go into the social tissue of the society, and have located and captured moments of how categories transform into ethnic groups. This thesis argues that the 56 categories actually reinforce the *minzu*, if not ethnic, identities of their members, and vice versa. The following section lines up Chinese ethnographers and foreign anthropologists in opposition, not to point a finger at either, but to illustrate their different attitudes towards, and concerns with, the NECP and post-NECP *minzu* categories. Generally speaking, the former are conformists while the latter are cynical. Dialogue is not intelligible/communicative, if there is any.

2.1.3 Contextualising Different Understandings of the NECP

This thesis maintains that the *minzu* category refers to ethnic groups formulated under a different set of assumptions and practices, from those of Western academia. The most striking difference lies in the belief in evolutionism on the Chinese side and the rejection of it over the past fifty years by many Western researchers. This evolutionism is the Morganian version adopted by Engels and Marx, and then inherited by the Chinese. Thus there is little common ground between the Chinese official representation and the Western academic understanding of the classification process. The parties of these two different discourses are talking about the NECP in different domains and approach Chinese *minzu* differently. The Chinese ethnographers' reflections are embedded in the socio-political contexts in the early 1950s,[25] while Western criticisms are mainly based on the disciplinary assumptions of anthropology. The Chinese were trying to reduce the fluid categories into a

[25] As Fei remarks, they are using anthropology "to serve the people and not to serve imperialism" in the NECP (Cooper 1973:480).

manageable, limited number of groups and subgroups (also see Keyes 2002). Western anthropologists, however, were questioning the inconsistency in the NECP operation in the classification processes, and reasoning about "ethnicisation".[26] Arbitrary as the NECP was, there were two-way interactions between the state and the people to a certain degree. This is understandable in a Chinese logic but *unacceptable* in a Western one except for a handful of masters.[27]

I never met anyone during my fieldwork who could not understand or accept the fact of cultural diversity within the Han category and the Chinese nation as processes of long-term migration, intermarriage and other forms of contacts among people from different parts of China have been passed on in oral traditions, family genealogies and popular culture through such forms as local operas, story telling and other forms of entertainments and are generally well known (see Bordahl 1999 for more).

This is not to deny the role that the state has played in the rationalization of Chinese *minzu* identities and the possibility of a "colonisation of consciousness" by the state (Gladney 1994:269) as mentioned earlier, but to place the NECP within a longer historical timeline and emphasise the other partner in this seesaw game: the people and their efforts to achieve a balance of power with the state and within the state. To most of the categorised peoples especially the Bai, *minzu* identities do not conflict with political/national identity or with local subgroups; identities can be

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[26]This means where the group is incorporated into the political structure of the state, yet with a different but usually lower status (see Caffrey 2004 and Gladney 2004).

[27] If some groups were told (Brown 2004: 190) who they were in the NECP, this has been a long process in history, never simply in NECP alone.

maintained at different levels. Relying on historical archives and earlier documentation, the NECP ethnographers knew the blurring of boundaries and flexible identities very well; their fieldwork experience also helped them understand that the cultural content within each category did not necessarily differ from one to another.

To Western researchers, the Post-modernist concern with resistance made them feel

> wounded by the reality that people given [an] identity by a state misusing social science as we know it have accepted rather than resisted that identity (Blum 2002: 1303)

More importantly, Chinese and Western divergence lies in classic evolutionism. The Chinese state, scholars and ordinary people hold an evolutionary perception even today.[28] As Blum (2002) insightfully points out:

> [T]he Chinese have never parted with evolutionism, the strong belief in the Morganian notion of unilinear cultural evolution makes relativistic orientation totally inapplicable (see Blum 2002).

The NECP fieldworkers sincerely believed that *minzu* (like class) would emerge, flourish and eventually disappear, whereas the evolutionary paradigm lost its attraction for Western anthropologists at the end of nineteenth century.

Although the point that we should not try to locate ethnicity in culture is well elaborated in ethnic identity studies (Barth 1969; R. Cohen 1978, Keyes 1981, 2002; Williams 1989), some anthropologists still try to locate a 'unique' culture within each

[28]See Fei (1981:43) for his evolutionist attitudes toward people under investigation in the NECP. Among common people (see Blum 2002) and among NECP ethnographers (see Huang Guangxue 1995, Du Yüting 1998, Ma Rong 2000b:17) See also Huang Guangxue 1987.

minzu category, and expect to see 55 (or more) culturally diverse groups in existence prior to the NECP.[29]

In addition, the NECP could not stand up to the scrutiny of trained anthropologists. They found that some categories simply legitimized already existing folk distinctions or fell back on the work of pre-1949 scholars.[30] Other major weaknesses included inadequate time allocated for fieldwork (see Blum 1994:124n17, Mullaney 2004b:212-213), problematic methodology, the lack of qualifications and inadequate training of fieldworkers,[31] not to mention the reductionist attitudes or impatience of some political leaders towards the project (see Mullaney 2004b: 234 n. 32).

In my view, the NECP is a "crucial mechanism of recognition" (Anderson 1998:319) that established a set of cognitive structures. It should be treated as a prelude to the making of current Chinese ethnic groups. The strength of the NECP remains largely reliant upon acts of reaffirmation, renewal and negotiation years *after* the NECP. It will be illuminating, as many anthropologists have already attempted, to examine how the "soft boundaries" (Duara 1995:66) are transformed into hard ones. This thesis calls attention to the post-NECP identity construction by those who seek for "a change in their perception and interpretation of their culture so that they can

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[29] Wu states that "I expected to find and document a minority culture which was quite distinct from that of the 'Chinese' [Han]" (Wu 1994[1991]:158). Taking the NECP for granted, I had the same expectations when I first went to do my fieldwork among the Bai in Dali.

[30] See Eberhard (1968), Blum (1994:54), Harrell (1995c) and McKhann (1998). In Gladney's words, "the Chinese state became convinced of claims to ethnic and cultural legitimacy, thereby leading to their initial recognition." While in other cases, the state denied such recognition (2004:175).

[31] As Wu Wenzao told his interviewer, the NECP working team did not require a professional team of specialists (Cooper 1973:481). Also see David Wu (1990).

justify a new identity" (Wu 1994[1991]:160). Given the fact that deliberate attempts of the state to classify and transform people on the 'periphery' have a long history in China, [32] people have had to come to terms with such classifications and transformation schemes, by actively modifying state ideals or even subverting state ideology. The NECP is not an exception. It has been transformed and internalised into a self-identification project at different levels.[33] So misinterpretations and "not-understanding" (Fabian 1995) of Chinese *minzu* happens now and then either due to failure to see the subjective use of the NECP categories to redefine identities,[34] or due to a failure to separate ethnic category from ethnic group as two different concepts. Except Harrell (2001c, 2002), few consider the fact that many of these *minzu* used to be ethnic groups prior to the NECP. I suggest balancing the state-*minzu* dichotomy and focusing on the midpoint, the "in-betweenness,"[35] or the "militant

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[32] According to Di Yongjun (2004) the Chinese term *minzu* first appeared between 489 and 537 AD and its meaning is quite similar to the current popular understanding, although the modern usage of *minzu* is often documented as a translation from the Japanese in the late 19th century (see Han Jingeun et all 1984, Ma Rong 2000a). All attempts and endeavours to transform the periphery people (including Han descents) are often criticized as purely colonialisation in the west. I assume an alternative approach is to view them as part of philosophical and religious schemes rather than a political one, although it is very difficult to separate philosophical, religious and political ends. The then rulers and elites were all initiated and implemented with the conviction that *jiaohua*, the spread of Confucian moral and spiritual teachings would save the world. This is especially obvious at the turn of the 20th century when China was striving for modernity (see Dikotter 1992:95-96), Duara 1995:205-227).

[33] See Harrell (1990a, 1995a, 1995c, 1996b, 2001b), Wu (1994), Cheung (1996) and Gros (2004) for more.

[34] This language includes ethnohistory, state discourse of ethnic classification (the NECP) and ethnic identity local people communicate to themselves and each other (see Harrell 1995c:98).

[35] Focusing on the processes in the articulation of cultural differences, Homi Bhabha (1994:1) points out that "these 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood."

middle ground" (Herzfeld 2001:x) when examining post-NECP Chinese ethnicity. But before I elaborate on this, the following section will introduce the theoretical concerns of this thesis by discussing studies on *minzu* at home and abroad.

2.2 Theoretical Concerns

The analytical understanding of China has been advanced substantially through William Skinner's (1964) regional system analysis and Maurice Freedman's (1958) lineage paradigm. These two paradigms elaborate the internal structural ties in local economy and social organisation. Later focus on the co-existence and tension between unity and diversity in China from a worm's eye view opens up a new horizon in the study of Chinese societies.[36] The new paradigm focuses on religious practices and popular culture and shares with the previous two paradigms the concern with the massive state power and its ramifications in local versions and fragmentations. The research struggles with representations of cultural similarities expressed as differences (Freedman 1974) and cultural differences expressed as similarities (Smith 1974), effectively deconstructing the centre-periphery dichotomy.[37]

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[36] Fei and Lin have been well acknowledged for their contribution to the anthropological understanding of rural Chinese society. Quite a number of researchers look into religious practices in a masterly way, such as C. K. Yang (1961), Stephan Feuchtwang (1974, 1977, 1991, 1996), James Watson (1985, 1991), Helen Siu (1989a), Arthur Wolf (1974a, 1974c) and Robert Weller (1987, 1994). See Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (1996) for a socio-political study on local cultures and identities in contemporary China. See Ann M. Hill (2006) for a review. Also see Crossley et. al (2006a) for a historical study of the same theme in Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

[37] Recent anthropological works address this very same topic from a political perspective, challenging

Anthropological emphasis on ethnicity and ethnic identity since the 1980s[38] has turned a new leaf in the study of Chinese society and Chinese *minzu* categories, which has contributed substantial empirical evidence. This new trend hit three local and global socio-political contexts that facilitated the boom in the study of Chinese *minzu*: the so-called cultural fever, restoration of ethnic minorities within China, world-wide ethnic conflicts such as the dissolution of the former Soviet Union (Blum 2002). The worm's eye approach has been challenged to conceptualise cultural differences/similarities without invoking the orthodox ideas of 'culture' and 'ethnicity'.

In analysing the non-Han population, anthropologists, whether or not they take *minzu* as ethnic, have to start from one of the 55 post-NECP *minzu* categories as a conceptual entity, and handle the relationship between the state and the locality in which a certain *minzu* identity is defined and redefined.[39] Researchers soon realised that it is impossible to focus on bounded, ahistorical[40] and homogenous cultural

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the assertion of a unifying Chinese identity (e.g. Brown 2004, Gladney 2004).

[38]Williams (1989:401) vividly describes ethnicity as "a lightning-rod for anthropologists trying to redefine their theoretical and methodological approaches ..." For a summary of the ubiquity of ethnicity as an anthropological research subject between 1960s and 1980s, see Williams (1989). Iredale et al (2003) published a preliminary volume which addressed the issue of ethnicity and internal migration in China.

[39]Recent works on ethnic identity are more politically oriented, challenging the assertion of a unifying Chinese identity (see Brown 2004 and Gladney 2004). As Ann M. Hill correctly points out, the cultural and identity dimensions of Gladney (2004) are "thin and generic", and his arguments and evidence are not clear (Hill 2006:98, 102). I agree with Gladney that "ethnic identity is an inherently political phenomenon" (2004:167), yet this does not mean we have to approach it politically. Brown seems to assume that there is a Tujia culture which is supposed to be distinguishable from the Han culture, and seeks to illustrate that.

[40] It is ahistorical due to the fact that the *minzu* categories were created in the NECP although

differences as *minzu* categories may have suggested. Looking up the English scholarship, I found Western researchers do not really take the *minzu* category as ethnic group (e.g. Lemoine 1989, 2005; Blum 1994; Harrell 2001c, 2002) although they all use terms/concepts such as ethnic group, ethnicity and ethnic theories to analyse the Chinese *minzu.*

Their Chinese counterparts, however, are either arguing that *minzu* are not actually what Stalin really defines (Ya Hanzhang 1982) or that *minzu* are exactly what Stalin means and that this was correctly translated as 'nationalities' in the 1950s (Wang Lian 1999, Naran Bilik 2001, Hao Shiyuan 2003c), or like the Western researchers just mentioned, that *minzu* are not ethnic groups in an anthropological sense (Shi Yilong 1999, Zhai Shengde 1999, Naran Bilik 2001, Jiang Deshun 2002, Xu Jieshun 2002). Still others suggest simply that the debate is a sterile one over abstract definitions and should not be continued (Shi Yilong 1999; Ma Rong 2000c; Naran Bilik 2000, 2003; Harrell 2001c, 2002; Jiang Deshun 2002; Fan Ke 2003; Pan Jiao 2003; Xu Xiaoxu 2004).

This thesis maintains that the meaning of *minzu* is significant because it lies at the heart of ethnic (or *minzu*) identity among the Chinese public who have accepted the state discourse. I understand there are always exceptions just as there are two sides to a coin. But this thesis focuses on the Bai, one of the more "conformist" groups rather than one of the controversial ones. I call the Bai "conformists" in the sense that they have accepted the state "assumptions" (Lemoine (2005:1). As this thesis will reveal, their identification with the state label is just the opposite of

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historical folk categorisation was taken into consideration.

Lemoine's (2005:1) implication since the Bai are happy to be integrated into the state category:

> The Chinese version of minority nationalities [*sic*] is an original construction based on historical, linguistic, cultural, economic criteria and the assumption that the groups gathered into one nationality would be happy to integrate into such a political entity (Lemoine 2005:1).

As will be detailed below, many Western researchers have worked on the *minzu* identities of various groups in China besides the Bai Identity, and the Bai studies conducted by Westerners also tend to brush aside identity issues. Perhaps this is because the Bai are conformists and thus considered not worthy of scrutiny in Western literatures since the 1980s. This thesis, as I said at the beginning of Chapter One, concentrates on Bai identity precisely because these people care very much and identify with Bai Identity on different occasions and in different ways. In exploring Bai Identity/identities, this thesis approaches the *minzu* category in the NECP, in both Chinese and English scholarship, and in the life and work of ordinary Bai people. This section does not aim to make a distinction between *minzu* and ethnic group, rather to present the debates over, and different understandings of, *minzu* and ethnic group so as to help understand the *minzu* categories as a part of contemporary Chinese society.

2.2.1 What does *minzu* mean?

It is a truism that early anthropological theories on ethnicity developed in the West were based mainly upon isolated studies of small-scale groups in Africa and South and Southeast Asia. These theories are "ill-equipped" and "cumbersome for

the understanding of ethnicity in large centralized, authoritarian nation-states like China" (Gladney 2004:157). Since Barth's (1969) milestone introduction, ethnicity theorists have continuously suggested looking beyond "culture" at space, identity and the politics of difference (Gupta and Ferguson1992). Yet when Western scholars encountered *minzu* in China, they "spent decades puzzling over what this means" (Blum 2002:1301-1302) and tried to figure out the relation between these categories and what the anthropologists would define as ethnic groups (if not nationalities).

To make it more difficult, Western anthropologists have never agreed on the definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity either as heuristic or analytical concepts. This ambiguity has created a lot of confusions in China in terms of the meanings of *minzu,* ethnic group, and the translation of *minzu* from- and into- English. Different English translations of the Chinese term *minzu* can be found in Fei's work (1981): "nationalities" (p.20), "national minorities" (p.20), "minority nationalities" (p.24) and "minorities" (p.25). Two of the most authoritive statistical yearbooks use "minority nationalities", [41] while *China's Ethnic Statistical Yearbook 2004* uses "ethnic groups" throughout the book. So the official terms the Chinese government used have been confusing.

The same complexity is present in the various English translations of the Chinese term *minzu* which appear in English scholarships, including 'minority

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[41] These two sources are: *China Statistical Yearbook 2004* (p.97) and *China Population Statistics Yearbook 2004* (p. 242). Such terms are still widely used in private and state sponsored websites, publications and tourist pamphlets. For a list of mistranslation and inconsistent usage of the term, see Zhai Shengde (1999/2:66-79), Zhou Xufang (1999).

nationalities', 'nationalities', 'ethnic minorities' or 'ethnic groups'(as a short form for 'ethnic minority groups).

The awkwardness and inadequacy is self-evident when Western anthropologists address the 55 official ethnic minority groups (*shaoshu minzu*). Most of them use the Chinese shorthand term '*minzu*', or 'minority nationalities', or 'ethnic groups' interchangeably while questioning the inherent ethnicity under each label. I understand their use of various English translations is for analytical convenience, or a consideration for a non-anthropologist readership, or the attitudes and perceptions of the writer towards the 55 post-NECP categories, even political implications. Nonetheless, some of them prefer to use *minzu* rather than its English translation (e.g. Harrell 1995b&c, 2001b), others discuss the *minzu* as ethnic groups but reserve some additional explanations (e.g. Blum 1994:331). This is understandable since the state-granted *minzu* categories in China do not carry the same connotations as the term 'ethnic groups' would have in the minds of Western anthropologists, for whom an ethnic grouping is defined as "informal" and on which "does not form part of the official framework of economic and political power within the state" (Abner Cohen 1969b:200, also see Harrell 2001c).

Moreover, unlike their counterparts in China, some Western anthropologists are reluctant to treat these 55 categories as ethnic groups, no matter what term is used.[42] Although made real at different levels by the people involved, the post-

[42]In English scholarship, Xie Shizhong (1989) first asked this question and it was reiterated by others (e.g. Keyes 1995:149), but none ever attempted to seek an answer. In a theoretically comprehensive and contextually sophisticated discussion about the development of *minzu* in China, Harrell is reluctant to spell out whether the *minzu* are ethnic groups or not (1995a). In the same way, he avoids equating *minzu* category with 'ethnic group' elsewhere when he points to the wide acceptance of

NECP categories are seen as nothing more than a notion of state-sponsored objectification of *minzu* groups and a mere product of the NECP, only familiar to students of colonialism (Gladney 1994). This time, it is Western anthropologists who find it difficult to understand why researchers in China have been debating over the meanings of *minzu* for five decades on end. This thesis holds that Chinese anthropologists and Western anthropologists both exhibit their own sets of flaws and limitations.

The debate over the meaning of *minzu* in China started in the 1950s and continues until today.[43] The debates between English and Chinese mainly centre upon interpreting Stalin's definition and the translation of terms such as '*minzu*', 'nation', 'nationalities', 'ethnos' and 'ethnic groups.' Some researchers attempted to get it right according to the Marxist, i.e. Stalin's, definition (Lin Yuehua 1985[1963], Ya Hanzhang 1982, Xiong Kunxin 1998, Hua Xinzhi 1998). In the 1980s some started to adopt the term *zuqun* (widely accepted as a Chinese translation for 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity') and prematurely criticised 'nationalities' as a proper English translation of *minzu* (also see Harrell 2001c). Experienced researchers started to

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ethnic categories in China (1995b, 1995c). Later, he pays attention to the fluidity and manipulability of ethnic identity (1996a) and why state categories are accepted without being contested. He suggests adopting the untranslated Chinese term '*minzu*' (2001a:7) and explains the reason in an article in Chinese (2001c). In the same way, although analysing the 55 *minzu* as ethnic groups per se, Susan Blum questions the nature of ethnic differences in the term 'ethnic' (1994:24); she then expresses similar reluctance in her conclusion. (1994:331).

[43] As noted by a number of authors, Ya Hanzhang et al. (1979), Xiong Kunxin (1998), Ma Rong (2000c) and Pan Jiao (2003). The discussion was heated to such an extent that the national authoritive journal *Minzu Studies* even organised a seminar and a special issue to facilitate the debate in the 1980s (Zhou Xufang 1999).

explore what 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' really mean in the West.[44] Most researchers concluded that although the term 'nationality' today seems improper, it was what *minzu* meant in the 1950s because (1) Stalin's нацицона¬ность (nationality) was meant to construct a homogenous nationality out of heterogenous peoples at a national level to build a unified nation-state; (2) the CCP intended to include all these 'nationalities' with equal ethnic status to build a unified state of multiple peoples (Ma Rong 2000c, Harrell 2001c, Hao Shiyuan 2003c, Fan Ke 2003, Pan Jiao 2003).[45]

On the surface, the five-decade debate is all about different opinions regarding translation options and the translatability of *minzu* from Russian into Chinese (Lin Yuehua 1985[1963], Ya Hanzhang 1984) and between English and Chinese (Naran Bilik 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2003; Ruan Xihu 1998, 2001; Shi Yilong 1999; Zhai Shengde 1999; Xu Jieshun 2002). This results in the previously mentioned conclusion that it is not necessary to speculate over the meaning of *minzu*. Yet this thesis maintains that the debate is absolutely necessary and is relevant to any study of Chinese *minzu*, given the fact that removing all the English translations, even under the NECP definition and classification guidelines, some *minzu* are not ethnic groups in an anthropological sense, and some *minzu* are not even *minzu* according to Stalin's four criteria (Harrell 2001c, 2002).

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[44] Hao Shiyuan published a series of articles to clarify Stalin's definition of *minzu* (2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d). See also Hao Shiyuan (2002a, 2002b), Pan Jiao (2003), Xu Xiaoxu (2004) and Gao Yuan's translated work of a Dutch researcher.

[45] Under this influence, some researchers started to examine when the Chinese term *minzu* came into use and where it was from (Han Jinchun et al. 1984, Di Yongjun 2004) including early usage that did not mean the same as today (see Ru Ying 2001).

The debate is necessary because it involves Marxist NECP ethnographers, Western-trained Chinese and Western anthropologists and discloses the substantial different grounds they sit on empirically, intellectually and theoretically. It should not be taken for granted that Chinese and Western researchers are talking about the same thing when they discuss Chinese nationalities, ethnic groups and *minzu.*[46] Young researchers and Western scholars, as Harrell (2001c) points out, may lack necessary background knowledge regarding what Stalin really meant, and the background to understand the CCP's ideology and careful choice of the term *minzu* and its translation 'nationality', which misled them to assume that it is a simple translation mistake.

For older Chinese researchers, especially non-English speakers trained as historians, contact with Western theories was quite limited,[47] and the reverse is also true, given that most publications have been available in either English or Chinese; but only rarely in both languages. Not many Western researchers have had access to the publications regarding the debate in China, either. And many Western anthropologists do not value the large number of Chinese publications due to their focus on the people, the research subjects, rather than these external factors that have been vital in a China context.

The debate provides a platform to discuss Stalin's rationale, which is rarely mentioned in the West and contemporary China, and to introduce Western theories to

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[46] This does not seem like what Fan Ke (2003) argues. For an anthropological distinction of *minzu* and ethnic group, see Harrell (2001b).

[47] The first contact was via *Race and Ethnicity* translated by a Taiwan researcher and a few articles according to Hao Shiyuan (2003d). At certain stage, Ma Rong is not firm in taking *minzu* as ethnic group (2003a). But he states that the 56 *minzu* are *zuqun* (ethnic groups) (2000c, 2003b n1).

Chinese researchers. The debate facilitates dialogue among Chinese colleagues and their Western partners (although a limited number) with a set of commonly understood terms in spite of all the confusion and futility.[48] The common ground is: *minzu* was correctly translated as "nationalities" in the 1950s to indicate the strong ideology of state-granted equality to all peoples in China (Harrell 2001b, Fan Ke 2003, Pan Jiao 2003), even though *minzu* is *not* what "nationalities" may mean today. And *minzu* may not necessarily be equivalent to 'ethnic group.' Most importantly, the debate has illuminated abuses and misperceptions of the basic concepts among Chinese researchers and helped reach common understandings of the very terms they are using in their research.

The debate actually draws attention to the fact that *minzu* categories are not necessarily monolithic or homogeneous although they appear to be neatly packed, and the state's defining the term does not entail the suppression of agency or provoke resistance (not the sort of resistance expected and elaborated in the West). *Minzu* labels can serve as both the instrument and expression of power. And people are employing the discourse of marginalization as a vital part of their efforts to maintain that power (Herzfeld 2001:23).

This thesis agrees that a *minzu* category should not readily be taken for granted

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[48] I have this feeling when I was reading the debate between Li Shaoming (2002) and Stevan Harrell (2002), between Shi Yilong (1999) and Ruan Xihu (1998, 2001), and that between Naran Bilik (2001) and Hao Shiyuan (2003d). These debates reveal the different background and knowledge structure among Chinese researchers and vis-a-vis Western or Western trained anthropologists. Seen in this light, the claiming of a "Chinese characteristic" (Naran Bilik 2000) or "China's own definition" (Li Shaoming 2002) may not be convincing. Naran Bilik's (1999) classification of *minzu* between "administrative *minzu*" (*xinzheng minzu*) and "group in an academic sense"(*xueshu minzu*) is more helpful.

as equivalent to an ethnic group. But I also want to point out that this does not mean some of the *minzu* categories are not ethnic groups. It is important to contextualise the *minzu* category in its original social setting for its own rhetorical discourse so as to avoid distortion or misunderstanding. Yet at the same time, I further propose to push that such necessary caution should not hinder our efforts in reflecting on ethnicity theories in a Chinese context. It is true that the NECP was an essentialised process of ethnification, but the recognition of official *minzu* identities in China has empowered these groups, who have accepted that identity and sought to define and exploit it on their terms.

After the 1980s, with the ongoing economic reforms and globalization in China, *minzu* identities did not disappear as the NECP evolutionists had expected,[49] but have become an important source of identity in the tourism market. A *minzu* category has become one of the many different forms that *minzu* identity may take. In this light, we may have to admit that the NECP has created some new ethnic identities after these *minzu* categories become ethnic groups.

It is important to bring up the *minzu* debate in this thesis because of the "différance" in the construction of a *minzu* category. The word "différance" comes from the Latin verb *differrer,* referring to the action of putting off until later; the ending *–ance* remains undecided *between* the active and the passive (Derrida 1982[1972]: 8-9). Derrida argues that *différance* is the "possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general." "*Différance* is the non-full, no-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences" (Derrida 1982[1972]:11)

[49] As Fei notes in his reflection that the state was keen "to reduce and eventually eliminate the cultural and economic differences" (1981:86) among ethnic minority groups.

After these categories were sealed and well accepted in and after the NECP, stereotypes and symbols come along with each *minzu* category as tools for continuous identity building, to such an extent that even if the so-called 'unique Bai' cultural characteristics are a myth, people still stubbornly justify their identification with it. On top of that, people do not seem to draw a clear-cut line between Han and Bai in spite of their persistence in lining up with the Bai. This does not mean that all *minzu* were formed *ad hoc* at the time of nation-building and have been substantiated only for instrumental ends, but to point out that the NECP made the 56 (including *Hanzu*) available. All the boundary-maintenance, subjective identification and construction of a 'unique' Bai culture, and fluidity (seen from a historical perspective) made the Bai into an evolving ethnic group even though it might not have been so in the 1950s.

2.2.2 Did the NECP create new ethnic groups/the Bai?

The *minzu* category can be invoked and deployed for political/personal ends, and should not to be treated uncritically as referring unproblematically to defined entities. Jonathan Unger (1997:76) notes that the Chinese state virtually manufactured "a new willingness to identify oneself more strongly as being of non-Han birth" in the 1950s. This thesis in concerned with the question De Vos (1995) raises: does *minzu* imply a new ethnic group definition? If yes, how is it achieved? If not, why? My quick answer to this question is both yes and no depending on which *minzu* we are talking about, the factors that historically exist, and new elements introduced after the NECP.

I maintain that the NECP created new Bai identities rather than a new group of the Bai.

Stevan Harrell notes that a *minzu* category may have "taken on a life of its own" (1989:181, 1990a:520)[50] in different socio-political contexts, which has, in turn, precipitated the formation of the group and reinforced ethnic identities. In this sense, it seems like new ethnic groups have emerged. He is aware of the existence of the Yi category in the minds of the various categories of the Yi, the Han and the state (1995a), and the fact that some sub-groups in the pan-Yi category do not really identify with the Yi. This prevents him from equating the pan-Yi *minzu* with the Yi ethnic group.

The picture is a bit different but comes to the same end among the Bai in Dali. As Jonathan Unger (1997:74) points out "[t]he peoples in the southwest had always had local identities and an awareness that they were different from groups 'in the next valley over' to one degree or another." Although different self-appellations are used even today, my informants from villages all identify with the category of Bai rather than simply being told so after the NECP. Difference within is often referred to as a result of Hanisation (*hanhua*), meaning a cultural/education process and intermarriage at different levels and to different degrees. Primordialist perceptions have been an important vernacular classification criterion related to descent and linguistic features. It is technically difficult to distinguish a 'distinct' Bai culture

[50] He notes that ethnicity and ethnic identities seem to have begun to develop in the past "32" years (Harrell 1989:196) and people "respond at least partially by developing an ideology of ethnicity or ethnic consciousness" (Harrell 1995a: 27), especially when "such consciousness may already exist" (Harrell 1995a:27). Also see Starr 1992:176 for a theoretical discussion of such kind of transformation.

although this is frequently claimed as the source of identity. The social organisation, economic activities, community life and domestic worship practices of the Bai have much in common with Han practices in other parts of China (see Chapters Four and Five, and F. K. Hsu 1948; Wu 1989, 1990, 1991; Blum 1994), and the Bai have shared the same living environment and social experience with other Chinese in the same geographic area in the past 50 years.

As will be elaborated in the following chapters, the emphasis on history in studies by Bai elite and their social events compels me to look back into history to explore what has produced contemporary Bai Identity. Bai Identity is not a pure creation of the NECP. Bai Identity/identities did not start from the NECP, although as a *minzu* label it did. Nor did it end there. It is obvious that Bai Identity has been historically conceived; different labels were applied to designate the predecessors of the Bai long before the NECP, and so were different self-appellations recorded in historical texts (see Chapter One). The Bai now consider themselves to be Bai only after the legitimate label *Baizu* became available; the NECP simply activated and mobilised the senses of being ethnic which already existed. As will be demonstrated in this thesis people have actively participated in filling up the category granted by the NECP. The Bai experienced a transition "from ethnic group to *minzu*" (Harrell 2001c, 2002) as other *minzu* in the NECP, and they also experienced one from *minzu* to ethnic group after the NECP by identifying with the state label. *Minzu* must be understood through state production as well as local construction.

Moreover, it often struck me in my fieldwork that people do believe (see also Keyes 1976:208) that they hold some cultural attributes in common. The so called

"cultural difference *within* a locality" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7) is not merely a problem/product of the anthropological mapping of cultures, but a result of strong convictions of the people involved. With such strong convictions, the Khmer refugees in the United States (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7) would not identify with the Americans 'culturally'. Nor would many Indian immigrants in England identify with an English culture. This brings up again my emphasis on subjective identification. It is the identification of a Khmer culture they have taken with them and an Indian culture they have imported rather than the cultures per se that makes these people different. Moreover, the displaced 'Khmer culture' and 'Indian culture' may pick up something that is different from what it is at home. Culture, or multiculturalism exists not because it is *sui generis*, but because of identification, and the identification always includes internal and external identification.

Similarly, why do people continue to articulate and redefine Bai identities after their Bai category has been demarcated by the NECP, especially when they do not have to choose a certain *minzu* label, although they do have to have one, in order to access state-granted privileges when these privileges have became more economical rather than 'ethnic' based? As I have tried to show, the socio-political circumstances, the potential resources tied with *minzu* status and people's subjective identification of a *minzu* label makes it an ethnic group, and this is what happened to the Bai. The Bai category has become a symbolic anchor, and *Baizu* has been transformed from an administrative category to a socially constructed/accepted ethnic group.

2.3 How to approach *minzu*?

This thesis locates the Bai in their own context by demonstrating how they construct Bai identities and ethnicity in post-NECP China. The following section will review some of the literature on ethnicity and ethnic identity in anthropological inquiries regarding different *minzu* and the Bai in China.

2.3.1 Literature on Southwest *minzu* identities and the Bai

As mentioned earlier, Western anthropologists are sceptical of the *minzu* categories in China, and quite a number of them have been working in Yunnan and southwest China, exploring *minzu* categories and *minzu* identities from various perspectives.[51]

Stevan Harrell systematically approaches the Yi communities in Sichuan and Yunnan. He points out that the Yi "all have a strong local ethnic identity" (2001a:13) although group identity "works quite differently" from place to place (2001a:14). Harrell's topics of research range from Yi kin terms (1989), local interests (1990), state influence (1995a), and Yi history and the state (1995b), to Yi language as represented in ethno history, state discourse and as a communication tool in daily life (1995c). He also elaborates on identity negotiations within the pan-Yi category (1996a) and the three-way interplay among the state, the people and the neighbouring peoples at such moments (1996b).[52]

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[51]They tend to focus on ethnic groups at odds with the state categories. At times, their focuses on the problematic classification seem to dwarf their concerns for ethnic identities and identifications.

[52] Swain (1990) examines the commodification of the ethnicity of the Sani (a subgroup of the pan-Yi

Schoenhals (2001) convincingly argues that for the Yi, ethnicity is "fixed at birth, by birth and are good" (p.255) so that caste and notions of Yi-ness are enough for people's self-definition (p.240), "not merely constructed in opposite to the ethnic 'other'" (p253). The pan-Miao category has attracted a larger team of researchers, who have produced a wider range of works in terms of their fieldwork areas and topics.[53] A dozen other *minzu* identities have drawn scholarly attention.[54] Even Subei, a native-place identity, is analysed and argued to be an ethnic one (Honig 1989, 1992).

Except for Gladney who approaches ethnic identity as an inherently political phenomenon (1998, 2004), none of these works ignore the role of the people within these categories in making their *minzu* categories meaningful (Lemoine 1989, White 1998, Blum 2001). Sydney White proposes a dialogical approach of the pan-ethnicity theory, drawing attention to the role of the state in shaping and creating ethnic identities *and* to "the agency of the citizens who are targeted as the objects of state policies and their appropriations of state categories in defining and redefining their

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category).

[53] Tapp notes a strong Hmong (known as Miao inside China) identity in the practice of geomancy (1986) and in legends (1996:83-98), and argues that a common culture precedes ethnic division. Schein (1986, 1989, 1997, 2000) explores Miao identities in cultural production and the different state/external representations of the Miao. Diamond analyses Miao identity and its relation to poison (1988), as well as imperial views in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1995). Enwall (1995) examines Miao identity on issues related with Miao written language. Cheung (2003) reveals the ethnic identity of the Ge people, a subgroup within the Miao category. Rack (2005) seeks to reveal local meanings of Miao ethnicity.

[54]The Yao (Faure 1987, 2006; Litzinger 2000, Jonsson 2000), Naxi (McKhann 1995, White 1998, Rees 2000:8), Manchu (Rigger 1995), Mongol (Borchigud 1996), Hui (Gladney 1998, 2004; Israeli 2002), Zhuang (Kaup 2000), Tujia (Brown 2002, 2004), Uyghur (Gladney 2004, Yee 2005).

identities"(White 1998). These authors illustrate that being ethnically distinctive accrues a variety of different meanings, and there are different ways of being and becoming distinctive ethnically in different contexts and localities.

However, some *minzu* categories that are not questioned, and especially those which tend to be "conformist," have not attracted that much attention (except for Harrell's study on the Pumi). For instance, the Bai Identity has not been adequately explored regardless of the fact that Bai identities have constantly been produced and exchanged in every social interaction since the first contact in history between locals and migrants from central China in the third century BC. As mentioned in Chapter One, previous work on the Bai has either regarded the predecessors of the Bai as Han Chinese or as a highly Hanised group.

Xu Jiarui's (1949) volume is more about local history and he seems to treat all the people in Dali as *minjia,* who are part of the Bai today. David Wu (1994[1991]) argues that their family structure, kinship systems and ancestor-worship rituals were the same as in [Han] Chinese society and culture, and there is not a distinctive Bai ethnic culture that can justify a Bai ethnic identity. Whether Wu's explanation is valid or not, he correctly concludes that the same people who identified with the Han in Hsu's day now identify with the Bai because of the post-NECP affirmative action privileges.[55] Based on the Bai case, Wu demonstrates the fluid nature of ethnic

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[55]David Wu repeats the same points elsewhere (1989, 1990, 1994), but he suggests that these people identify with the Han in F. K. Hsu's time but identify with the Bai after the NECP. Leach (1982:125-126) criticises F. K. Hsu for losing sensitivity when conducting fieldwork among the 'us' group. Notar (1999:61-74) writes about verbal, visual and textual ("both Chinese and European") representations of the Bai in Dali, and criticises Hsu and Wu for denying Bai cultural difference. I do not agree with Hsu in treating people in West Town totally as Han Chinese, but I understand that Hsu's focus on ancestor

identity and challenges the common view that the Bai are a culturally unique group. Wu's instrumentalist conclusion effectively separates Bai ethnicity and Bai Identity from a Bai culture. Yet more needs to be done in terms of why people identify with the Bai rather than the Yi or other *minzu* categories that are equally beneficial in affirmative action.

But there are two book-length ethnographies in English and one in Chinese produced in current Dali (DBAP). C. P. Fitzgerald (1941) describes the *minjia* who had "radical differences from the Chinese" in terms of social and kinship systems and religion (1941:20).[56] Francis K. Hsu (1948) elaborates on his theory about Chinese personality through his ethnography in West Town, 95% of whose population are Bai today.

Taking ethnicity as a process of subjectivity and "différance", I would be quite sympathetic towards Hsu for the wrongful criticism he has received. In my view, Hsu had every reason to treat them as Han Chinese, not because their practices (ancestor worship and family structure) were not different from other Han Chinese, nor because they spoke Min Chia as mother tongue (F.K.Hsu 1971[1948]:18), but

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worship and his methodology, especially his single village confinement in that particular elite Bai village, obviously led him to 'see' his subjects as a separate ethnic group. And this is quite possible given the strong discriminations against ethnic peoples in the 1940s. So my point is: Hsu is actually not wrong in viewing his subject as Han since that's what they claimed and practiced, although Hsu's theoretical conclusion is definitely a generalised one.

[56] Fitzgerald takes "Min Chia" as ethnonyms given to these people by the Han Chinese because their self-denomination is "Ber Dser" (white people) or "Ber Wa Dser" (children of the white king) (1941:12-13). Fitzgerald comments that "[t]he population of the Ta-li Plain for the most part are the Min-chia tribes who have successfully maintained their hold against displacement by the Han-Chinese. Highly sinicised [Hanised] themselves, the Min-chia are being rapidly absorbed into the mainstream of the Han-Chinese culture." (1941:154) Goullart (1955:129) finds people in Dali resemble Angkor Wat.

because it is most likely that none of his subjects ever claimed they were ethnically distinctive since Hsu's informants insisted "insist they are more Chinese [Han] in some respects than the Chinese in many other parts of China" (F. K. Hsu 1971[1948]:19). Hsu's 'ethnic blindness' was from an emic view while the critiques of Hsu were etic. Although the family structure, ancestor worship and other rituals are all the same, they still identify differently, or "think themselves into difference" (A. P. Cohen 1986:17). However, this does not necessarily mean that Bai identity is a "mere act of imagining" (Barth 1994).

Based in the provincial capital city of Yunnan, and focusing on official and popular narratives of ethnic identities, Susan Blum has investigated urban Han popular views of ethnic minorities (including the Bai) and vice versa, pointing out the prestige of Bai Identity in Yunnan (1994:235-241). Her work offers us a general perception of the Bai and the Han towards each other. Yet, since most of her informants were either Han or Bai who were brought up and educated in urban areas far away from Dali, it lacks locally-based Bai people's views.

Beth Notar (1999:50-59) notes that raw food and loose women associated with the predecessors of the Bai seemed to have constituted a major difference between 'Bai' and Han in historical Chinese representations of the 'Bai.' Although the issue of representation is a methodological and perceptive/perspective one, such a historical-text based perspective needs enriching given the vast archives available and needs updating regarding what has been going on over the past few decades.[57]

Doorne et al. (2003) attempt to explore Bai Identity through representations in

[57] Moreover, the issue of representation is a methodological and perspective one.

the tourist market. As one of the authors, I realized later that it is necessary to examine the earlier development of Bai identities before their engagement in the reproduction of "touristic ethnicity" (Wood 1998).

Within China, Duan Dingzhou (1998:201-242), a Bai intellectual, discusses "the identity consciousness of the Bai" (*baizu de rentong yishi*) from a Morgan-Engels approach. Duan locates Bai Identity in terms of Bai language and what is often presumed to be traditional cultural heritage. While Duan provides an insider's view according to his understanding of Bai Identity based on historical documents, there is still plenty of space to bring in the voices of his fellow Bai and research findings within and outside China.

The fact that the revitalized Bai genealogies do not actually deny their Han origin leads Duan Weiji (2004) to concluding that the Bai have a "double identity". I partly agree with Duan Weiji but would refrain from such a radical conclusion since my fieldwork data demonstrates multiple identities at different levels within the Bai spectrum. Bai Identity is more complex and flexible than any essentialist claim or reductionist theorisation might imply.

Apart from these works on Bai Identity, most other English monographs, articles and PhD theses in Chinese are on different aspects of the Bai in Dali,[58] and will be referred to throughout the thesis where appropriate, in order to offer a nuanced

[58] See Chapin (1944), Wiersma (1990), Yokoyama (1991), Hayashi (1995), Notar (1999) and Allan (2004). Although these works are not focusing on identity, these authors touch upon issues regarding how local people identify themselves. A few PhD theses focus on the Bai from their migration and lineage (Wang Jichao 2000), religious practices (Liu Yan 2002, Liang Yongjia 2003, Jing Dongchao 2003), history of language usage (Yang Wenhui 2003), folk music (Dong Xiutuan 2005) and business associates (Cheng Yanbing 2005), yet none of them put the strong Bai Identity/identities in the centre of their research.

understanding of the Bai.

2.3.2 Understanding the Bai in contemporary China

This thesis approaches the Bai through the ways in which they subjectively identify themselves. I am fully aware that there is a *particular but not distinctive/unique* representation of *minzu* in China in contrast to ethnic representations elsewhere. It is important to start from the state-defined category and to be mindful of how researchers approach these *minzu* groups rather than what kind of ethnicity is represented. The question is whether it is possible to examine the Bai with a set of concepts/theories designed mostly in the West. This thesis tries to avoid abandoning a holistic approach in favour of any one clear-cut theoretical formula which might handicap understanding. In fact, researchers emphasise the fluid and constructionist[59] nature of ethnic identity.

Theoretical paradigms in identity study have been comprehensively advanced in anthropology (Barth 1969; Keyes 1981, 2002; Bentley 1987, R. Cohen 1978, Young 1983, Williams 1989, Hutchinson and Smith 1996a, Herzfeld 2001), and as Hutchinson and Smith (1996b:9) point out, "few scholars" today adhere to either the primordialist or the instrumentalist pole,[60] and "there have been few systematic attempts to synthesize the two types of approach". In exploring the dynamic process

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[59] This thesis chooses 'constructionist' rather than 'constructionalist' or 'constructivist,' as 'constructionist' is the most commonly used term in anthropology.

[60]Given the fact that Geerts is often reckoned as "a patron of primordialism" and Wallerstein, "a practioner of instrumentalism" (Young 1983:660), I have an impression that anthropologists are more concerned with primordialist features while, political scientists, with instrumentalist motivations

in the formation of Bai identities, I have realised that primordialist,[61] instrumentalist and constructionist approaches can all be helpful for an integrated use, rather than merely focusing on cultural contents and clear-cut boundaries, or pitting one approach against another. Non-constructionist paradigms can be questionable and unfruitful if applied rigidly. A primordialist approach cannot fully reveal the process of identity construction, nor explain how ethnicity is closely related to politics and agency. An instrumentalist approach cannot explain how boundary-crossing is easily achievable, socially acceptable and does not necessarily imply instrumental motivations. Nicholas Tapp (2002) calls for the need of essentialism in accounting for the post-NECP *minzu* against an extreme constructionist approach.

However, if we can make full use of all these perspectives in combination, we will be able to enhance our understanding of *minzu* in contemporary China, to avoid obscuring important aspects of the phenomena under study and getting bogged down the "antimonous posturing" (Bentley 1987:25). Although it is questioned by Hutchinson and Smith (1996:8), I argue that a "synthesising" (Fabian (1991[1990]:155) approach can be illuminating when we look into the Bai. A synthesising approach is actually embedded in a constructionist approach in theory, but when applied in a Chinese context, the flaws of applying a constructionist approach in isolation stand out immediately.

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[61] According to Keyes (1976), there is no consensual set of attributes that can be termed primordial; the most commonly based upon language, origin myths and folk histories that trace a shared experience. As this thesis will argue, it is the *ideas* of, or make-believed primordialist features that shape people's ethnic affiliation.

Most post-Barthian anthropologists underline the importance of boundary maintenance from a constructivist perspective, which was, as Herzfeld (2001:140) points out, already present in Barth's volume. A constructivist approach is effective in avoiding static or rigid frameworks, but does not necessarily ignore primordialist claims/attachments or abandon an instrumentalist approach entirely. The constructivist approach appears to look into the primordialist and instrumentalist constructions of ethnic identity in different contexts in a more comprehensive and sophisticated way. And a constructionist approach has at least two dimensions. One is the construction of knowledge by the researcher,[62] which it is no longer an anthropological taboo to admit. The other is the subjective creation of cultural differences by the research subjects, which is always highly valued in anthropology.[63]

Obviously, often treated as an external definition, state construction has no place and holds lesser importance in the study of identity. So in addressing the *minzu* categories in China, it is still somehow seen as unacceptable to argue that *minzu* are

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[62]Hinton points out that the Karen became well known because the cultural distinctiveness of the Karen was assumed "where there was none" (1983:165). Renard (2003) follows the same line and insists that there was no reference to Karen before the 19th century.[62] Such questioning also haunts the study of the Kachin, who had not received any international attention before Leach (1954). Failing to locate observable unique ethnic traits in language, ritual or daily practice, Hinton (1983) tries to push further the constructionist approach by suggesting that ethnic groups are anthropologically constructed, which prevents him from seeing the expressions of identity working outside of cultural traits familiar to the anthropological gaze. Paradoxically, Hinton's argument actually presumes the existence of ethnicity and cultural differences although he is arguing against it. He goes to check out whether there are any cultural traits to define Karen, and, failing that, he accuses anthropology of having constructed the group.

[63] Even if it is to let the subjects to construct their self-image in the reflection of, not merely in cooperation with, anthropologists.

external constructions of cultural Others. Thus, in trying to argue that ethnicity is "the product of combined scientific, lay, and political classification" (Williams 1989:402), this thesis tries to make sense of the assumed 'scientific' and political classification in the NECP and of the subjective identifications of ordinary people. In terms of ordinary people's constructions, they are neither primordial nor instrumental alone. They involve both available primordialist sentiments (see Geerts 1963) and instrumental manipulations (Harrell 1990a:520),[64] and "even the most instrumental manoeuvres are grounded in layers of historical reality." (Crossley et. al 2006b:7)

Standing on the ground of constructionism, we look into cultural content not to examine whether it possesses ethnic traits but to demonstrate what it is that people have made substantial to support their claims of uniqueness. In the case of the Bai, looking into the primordialist features helps us understand the constructive nature of Bai Identity because all of the primordialist features claimed by the Bai are actually shared, in one way or another, with other groups.[65] Bai identities are often validated by culturally defined notions of descent and socio-political circumstances at the time of the claim.[66] This is especially true when we look into the ways people use their genealogies to legitimate their ethnic origin, as often encountered in the field. The

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[64] See also Keyes (1981) and Williams (1989) who urge ethnicity theorists to consider both material motivations and cultural formations of ethnic identity. Williams pushes further that "[a]n adequate theory of ethnicity must account for the historical and contemporary ideological linkages among ethnicity and other categorical aspects of identity formation processes in nation-states."(1989:429). See also R. Cohen (1978).

[65]See also David Wu (1994). The so-called Bai costumes refer to women's dress which was regarded as "inauthentic' by many of my informants because it copied the dress of the 1950s popular movie "*Five Golden Flowers*".

[66]It all depends on which one is more relevant at the time when certain identity is claimed. Other factors may be present at the same time and may have different influence on different individuals.

first one or two generations in their genealogies are often indigenous people without surnames. Under such circumstances, people can either claim to be indigenous (emphasizing early generations) or Han (emphasizing later intermarriages).

Moreover, even though there was no group named Bai prior to the NECP, there are strong sentiments associated with a shared legendary ancestry,[67] and local history is often asserted as Bai history. People simply ignore the facts that geographic differences among the Bai are very evident, audibly obvious in dialects and visibly obvious in their dress. The building blocks of a Bai culture are often similar to those of the Han culture (Blum 1994:22). Such claimed 'primordial' features actually help locate what people have done with their *minzu* labels in the past 50 years, and eventually the nature of Bai ethnicity reveals the constructed nature of Bai identities and illuminates the conceptualization and expression of identity that works outside certain cultural traits.

An instrumentalist approach can be ideal when we look at the drastic population growth among the *minzu* in China between 1982 and 1990,[68] which is also the case with the Bai people's identity change in the 1930s and 1980s, as Wu et al (1982b) and David Wu (1989, 1990, 1994[1991]) exemplified.[69] However, such an instrumentalist approach is limited because it only explains some Bai people's identity at certain points in history. On top of this, the instrumentalist approach

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[67] See Lien (2003) for different origins stories of the ruling class between 11th to the 15th centuries. One of the origin stories has been visualized in Nanzhao Fengqing Island (a tourism theme park) as a standardized version of Bai origin story.

[68] See data in footnote 12, p.65 of this chapter.

[69] And we assume people crossing the line from Bai to Han in the 1930s (see F. K. Hsu 1948), and from Han to Bai since the 1980s (D. Wu 1989, 1990, 1994[1991]).

cannot distinguish sentimental motives from instrumental ones. Moreover, many of the *minzu* under current anthropologists' gaze are actually people who have integrated with the Han (Faure 1987) or completed assimilation as Han Chinese (Harrell 1995a:31).

This chapter calls for renewed attention to the state construction of identity. As noted previously, the state-constructed Bai category was not constructed out of thin air.[70] It does have some connections with notions and various ethnic labels which existed in history, and it is, in part, based on meaningful interpretations of the place and a past that is believed to be commonly shared. Although there is no way to produce any evidence due to the long history over time, for the time being, symbolic representations of Bai Identity are negotiated through practices constrained by socio-political contexts and social relations defined by the state.

This thesis also emphasises that Bai identities are an ongoing social categorisation of dynamically (re)produced social relations. Such relationships can be vertical as well as horizontal, and should be considered in-between present and past, insider and outsider, self and deities, state and local.[71] And some of these

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[70] The "mere act of imagining" is not enough (Barth 1994:13), if Benedict Anderson is "often taken too literally" (Gladney 2004:177). Lemoine (1989) attributes the current active identification with an ethnic minority in China to the benefits the state grants to ethnic minorities, which is true with those who are not granted ethnic status. But in many cases, this explanation is not so sufficient to explain the consciousness among people who want to claim a new ethnic status or to be enlisted under another category (Jinuo is a case in point).

[71] It must be acknowledged here that identity theories are all relation-oriented in one way or another, but it has become problematic when theorists try to pin down one or two abstract rules. The boundary maintenance approach narrowly focuses on relations between people under study vis-à-vis other people while undermining that relation can be multifaceted and multiple levels. The primordialist paradigm clings to the relationship between the past and the present, which tend to essentialise ethnic

relationships have been in local, provincial, national and global spheres, while in most cases this in-betweenness is both a space that the state creates and the local people create due to "the need to come to terms with their environment and respond to people otherwise categorized and differently linked to local ecology and the state machinery."(Crossley et. al 2006b:20-21)

Yet this is not to exclude the attraction of Han culture and some shared cultural understanding developed over centuries as Crossley et. al (2006b:20) rejected. As mentioned previously, from a Chinese perspective this is the way things have been operating, and the dichotomy between the state and *minzu* itself is not problematic. The problems are narrow focus on the state, unbalanced analysis and the essentialising of whatever is presumed to be at either end. It is important to see *what has been claimed as different* and what the people perceive *can be made* different. How the Bai have presented what is Bai is more important than what is Bai regardless what the "presumed essential qualities" (Keyes 1995:152) are. More attention should be given to the actual process of such strategic and positional difference-making which denotes a dialectical rather than a mutually exclusive logic.[72]

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identity to features such as an assumingly shared history/origin and locality. The instrumentalist paradigm focuses on the relationship between state and society, overstressing the upper hand of the society. But the impossibility of comprehensive mastery and the impossibility of constructing a coherent and adequate theoretical system still inspires researchers to explore.

[72] Gladney (1996:76-78; 2004: 189-193) argues for a dialogical rather than a dialectical interaction, but this thesis argues that the problem lies in essentialising a centre-periphery or Han versus the rest dichotomy, rather than in what we name it.

The Bai make claims about a lot of shared cultural traits in their own terms.[73] There is "a difference deferred" (Seigel 2006: 637),[74] a difference that lies more in the subjective positioning rather than what is imagined or claimed by people involved. The state-defined category is gradually sewn into the fabric of everyday life, which in turn has precipitated a self-perceived *minzu* identity whether the *minzu* identity is or is not identical with an ethnic identity in any particular sense. For the Bai, imagining being an ethnic group involves pulling historical resources and social memories together, and this only became possible and clearer after the state-designated label became available (this is also why *minzu* categories are often not accepted as ethnic groups in English literature).

Minzu identity could not be real until it had become accepted in the local language, social events, social landscape and the hearts of those classified under the label. The state has had a limited role in the real formation and expressions of *minzu* identity. The creation of NECP categories has caused a number of reactions. The next chapter will attend to one of these reactions among the Bai elite who, alongside the state in the 1950s and ordinary people in their daily life, have equally shaped the making of the Bai.

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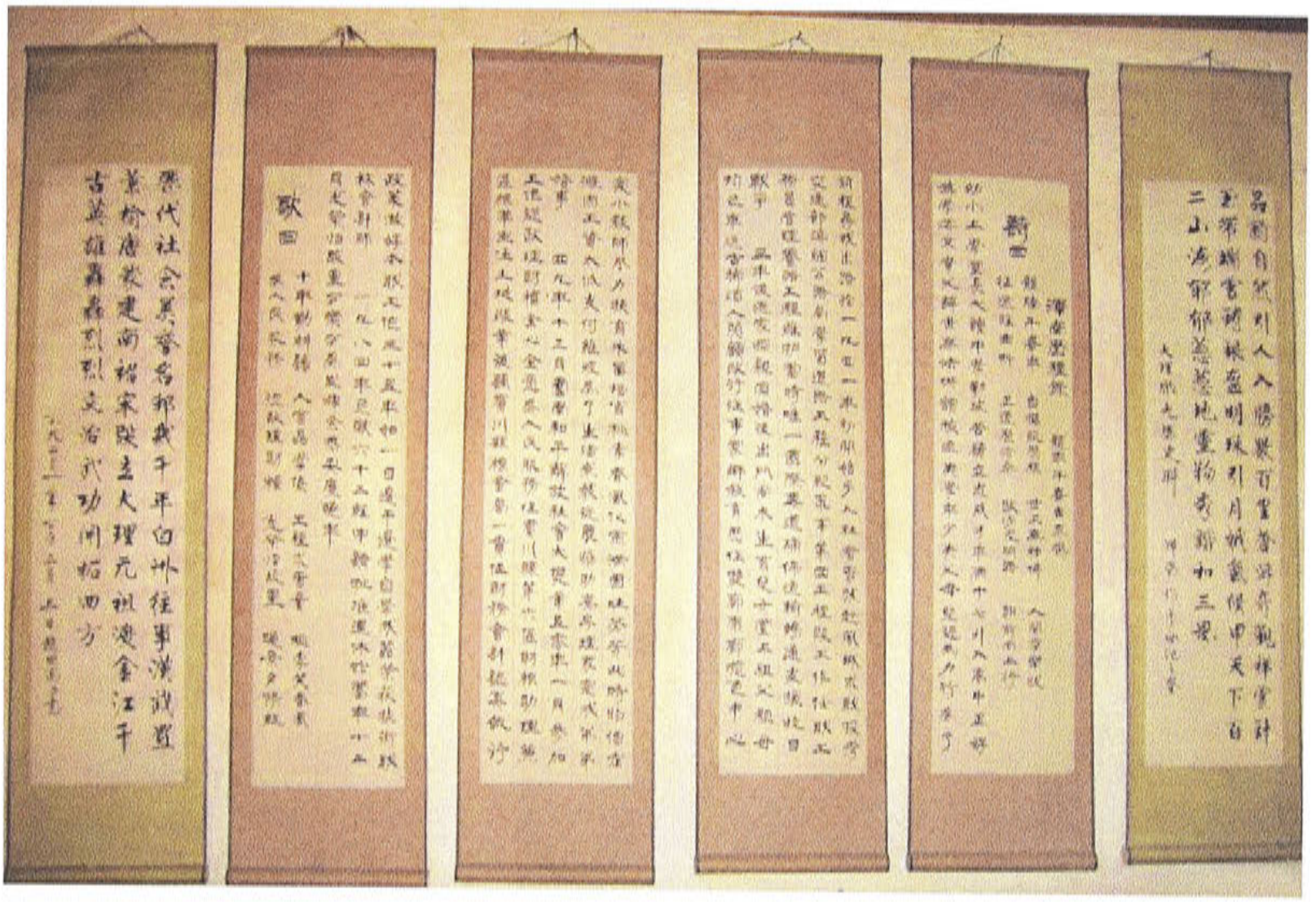
[73]Susan Blum (1994:22) notes that most of the building blocks of ethnic groups in China are similar to the building blocks of Han Chinese. Consider the geographic area of her fieldwork (mainly urban Yunnan), she has good reason to make this remark.

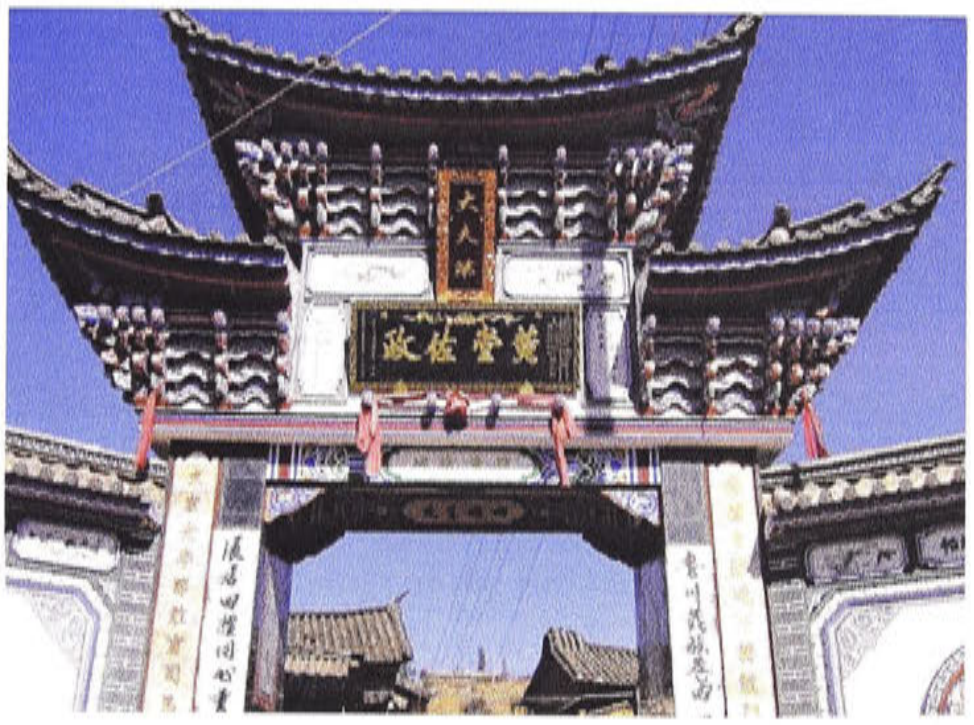
[74]Abner Cohen (1974:xiv) also talks about the process in time, a process of mutual adjustment, and/or of integration, and of losing cultural identity among migrants. In Dali, I found similar process going on. The Bai have been adjusting to changing situations by adopting traditional customs from various sources and developing their own interpretations of such traditional symbols to project an inferred, if not imagined, ethnic distinctiveness.

Chapter Three

Local Scholarly Making of the Bai



Ill. 9: Autobiography hung in the sitting room of Mr. Xiang, Colour Village. 2004.



Ill. 10: Modern replica of fancy Bai style gate. Splendour Village. 2004.

Ill. 11: Senior male villagers *koutou* in front of *benzhu* images. Splendour Village. 2004.

Ill. 12: Evidence of a splendid long Bai history Mr. Fu collected. 2004.

Chapter Three

Local Scholarly Making of the Bai[1]

Chapters One and Two explored how the state categorised the population into 56 fixed entities. In order to have a nuanced understating of the Bai identities and Bai Identity construction, this chapter goes beyond conventional ethnography and examines the Bai elite who have been *writing* their own narratives in terms of local history and culture, thus filling and re-inventing the *Baizu* category. Bai studies started in 1956 and have undergone three phases. At first the newly classified Bai category was theoretically weak, then it was totally ignored during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), and finally it re-surged in the 1990s following the promotion of ethnicity and economic development.

Moreover, Bai studies have mostly been carried out by the Bai themselves; it is a Bai ethnicity identification project at a local level, and a collective effort to identify Bai heritage in local history and language. This five-decade discussion on the origins of the Bai, local history and the Bai language has questioned who they were and where they came from. Theoretically speaking, Bai studies conducted by the Bai are an effort to highlight its boundaries in order to essentialise the Bai category.[2] This

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[1] This chapter is dedicated to the Bai researchers who commit themselves to Bai studies, especially those who were not able to reap the benefits of an articulated Bai Identity and never gained a platform to pass on their legacy. Unless specified otherwise, all mainland Chinese writers mentioned in this chapter are members of the Bai, whose studies differ from those undertaken by non-Bai researchers in terms of research priority and perspectives.

[2] See Litzinger (2000:255-57) for an analysis of Yao elites as active producers of local knowledge.

chapter maintains that Bai studies is a highly contested collective endeavour, and should be viewed as a form of the construction and articulations of Bai Identity. In seeking to define their own version of Bai ethnicity, Bai elite have acted as political players different from the state, and have been empowered through their research.

This chapter critically examines the bulk of the literature on Bai history and culture produced by local Bai elite since the 1950s. I do this by integrating my fieldwork observations and interviews with their writings. The purpose of this particular textual approach is twofold. First, it is to bring out the voices of those who are taken for granted as deprived of subject positions (Hall 1996). Hill (2006:101) argues that subaltern voices are mostly immanent rather than present, but the voices expressed in the past five-decade Bai studies are progressively becoming more and more present.

Unfortunately, these voices are rarely known to the outside world except in Japan (see Hayashi 1995:2-5) since scholarship in China is often considered as bound up with official agendas (see also Hill 2006) or brushed aside. In addition, Bai elite have acted as data providers and fieldwork guides/interpreters, but their voices obviously have not, or at least, seldom, been heard outside China, even though they never lack the means of self-representation and negotiation.[3] Ironically, the voices of Bai elite, albeit mediated by state discourses, have been heard and tolerated by the state.

Mullaney (2004a:201) insightfully points to the critical roles of local elites who played out the state categories, but he did not explore the area further due to his focus on pre-project taxonomic pedigree.

[3] Susan Blum (2006:80) sharply calls our attention to fact that "some of the early twentieth century anthropologists relied on "native" informants, but their identities were often considered much less important than those of the white anthropologists."

The second purpose is to demonstrate the identity dynamics in the negotiation of knowledge (Downey 1992:87), and the self-consciousness of the Bai elite who have reversed the self-other or subject-object structure which had been present since imperial times in China. Research topics in Bai studies deal with a wide range of topics; this section concentrates on research related to Bai Identity so as to illustrate the local elites' contributions to the discursive construction of Bai Identity. Many of these studies are stereotypical descriptions and do not stand up to empirical investigation,[4] and their arguments are confusing and even contradictory. Yet the point is to reveal the dynamics and complexity in their construction of a Bai Identity.

As I earlier noted, Bai identity is discussed here in its multiple and singular forms. The plural form refers to the Bai people's self-felt identities in different degrees. The singular form is capitalised and either refers to the group identity as projected by the Bai as a sort of collective 'one true self', or the collective Bai identity assumed by, and common in the discourse of, outsiders. First, let us see who these local elites are.

3.1 Who are the elites?

Dirlik (2001) complains that Western critics focus on narrowly defined groups and overlook the power of "native" elites, who set the terms of the discussion of culture. But Dirlik's criticism is not proper in relation to China studies. This is not

[4] Before Bai studies become more common, a Tujia historian, Xiang Da (1954) argued that many archives recorded by traditional literati were mere fictions. This view is brushed aside by Bai researchers who take these archives as true documentation of 'historical facts'.

the case with China studies scholars. Many researchers have noticed the important roles local elites have played and have applied terms such as "gentry" (Fei 1953), "local elites" (Faure 1986:128-140; Weller1987:125-43; Siu 1989; M.L. Cohen 1994:97, Litzinger 1995, 2000:21; Cheung 1996, 2003; Mullaney 2004a), "literate intermediaries" (Johnson 1985:36) and "knowledge worker[s]" (Dirlik 2004:307).[5] Yet none of these terms is sufficient to describe adequately the individuals involved. The term "local elites" is used because it captures the overlapping of education and the prominent socio-political status most of these individuals possess,[6] but it still fails to represent those who are not really properly trained or socially prominent. Either "literate intermediaries" or "knowledge workers" may be more accurate, evoking the richer and more specific purposes of those involved, but these terms are somewhat unwieldy. From an emic point of view, I am tempted to call them "Bai scholars" or "Bai intellectuals," as these are the terms which they prefer. However, considering the meanings of 'scholars' and 'intellectuals' in English, I have resorted to the general term 'local elites,' bearing in mind that it is inadequate to cover the wide range of individuals referred to in this chapter.

By "local elites" I mean the diverse range of individuals who have conducted Bai studies imbued with a strong self-awareness of being Bai. Most of them work in state institutions in Dali prefecture or in the provincial government. Some have been

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[5] See also M. Freedman (1979a&b) when he discusses the class of the semi-literati or failed scholars.

[6] Yang Xiandian et al. (1982) offer a case in point: the anniversary celebration in honour of Yang Pu, a Bai poet in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) surpasses the significance of the local deity procession. People came all the way from Mega and Betel counties (taking about three hours to commute to the site of the event).

well trained in Chinese history, Chinese literature, ethnology,[7] and the hard sciences including engineering. Some of them are well-established community members in alliance with temples and literati associations (see Faure 2002, for more cases in southern China); others are local cadres or retired public servants or school teachers.

Regardless of their diverse educational or career backgrounds, these individuals are well accepted and respected by other Bai, who often endow anyone who knows about local history with high social esteem. Whenever I was curious about the tradition of an event or the significance of a certain item, a common response was, like one woman told me:

> I am afraid you have to ask those who had some schooling, we are [read, I am] illiterate, we do not know that, we just follow the way it has been done. They [the educated] know everything! (February 2004)

In almost all these cases, the next thing they would do is to introduce me to someone whom they believe knows about local history. Failing this, or if they noticed that I wanted to learn more, they would introduce me to other well-informed persons.[8]

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[7] For a thorough account of Chinese ethnology, see Guldin (1990) and Wang Jianmin (1997).

[8] Learning to read and write in Chinese in Dali has been available and accessible since the Yuan dynasty (1253-1368). As in most parts of China, when a family accumulates some capital that may, in fact, be needed to enjoy a decent living standards, the first thing they do is to send their sons to school. Schooling is the only way the vast agricultural population can escape a farming fate and help move the whole family gradually out of agriculture. In Dali within every household I set foot in, I found on the family altar, the slogan: *tian-di-jun-qin-shi*, meaning Heaven, Earth, Emperor, ancestor, teacher (educator including the educated), which indicates the important position of teachers. The Bai do not have an initiation ritual, but they have a banquet which is the equivalent when their sons and daughters

The local elite are not a new phenomenon but are crucial to the understanding of Bai Identity/identities because they are the most vocal members of the Bai category and their role is always dual: they are political and cultural brokers, representing and bridging the state and society, acceptable to state officials and respected by the local community (Siu 1989:85), and they are discursive producers of who the Bai are and models for the Bai population. Although some do not have university degrees, they are profoundly keen on writing or talking about what they consider to be Bai history and culture. They view themselves as traditional Chinese literati and have taken up, and have been expected to take up, the responsibility of writing local history and of providing guidelines to the state as well as to the commoners.[9] They are a strong voice at a national level in policy-making regarding issues relevant to their daily lives by writing reports to the government and making requests on behalf of the community.[10]

My interactions with members of the local elite, whether in person or through their publications, reveal the fact that in spite of all the differences in their personal lives or careers, they take up Bai studies as a way of presenting their identity

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are admitted to universities or even secondary professional schools.

[9] In spite of their wide range of scholastic backgrounds, traditional literati played a major role in the spread of popular festivals such as the mid-Autumn festival, the legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, and the cult of the stove god. For a study about the movement of beliefs, ideas and values from the upper middle class to lay persons, see Johnson (1985:36). Modern elites' role as informants and guides at the time of the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) in the 1950s had already enabled them to gain more scholarly attention.

[10] The ordinary folk live within a culture deferred by elites that influences their lives in manifold ways (see Watson 1985, 1991; Weller 1987 and Faure 1999 for cases in other parts of China). Local scholars are valued by the local political elites, albeit inadequately. Businessmen turn to local scholars only when they need to find a way to make use of ethnicity.

consciousness and exercising agency.[11] Bai studies is an effective way of dropping group boundaries, claiming power, and representing the interests of the group and as a group. The Bai elite have become the very agents of the "phantasmagoric ethnic imaginings" discussed by Litzinger (2000:238); ethnicity discourses have become a highly manipulated discourse backed up by the local elite.[12]

Local elites obviously are visible to the eyes of Western researchers, but their publications and the identity they articulate are often ignored. In the case of the Bai, the elite have organized associations, research institutes and publications (see Table 5 in this Chapter), which serve as a basis to produce their versions of being Bai. The most important organisation is the Bai Studies Association set up in 1990, which publishes an annual journal. Trivial aspects of local history have become crucial resources for elaboration,[13] scrutinized and exploited to represent different degrees of Bai-ness.

At an institutional level, these Bai elite fit well into the society and do not have to articulate their Bai identity. Their group status is officially designated and

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[11] Failing to start from this perspective, some external researchers could not understand the point of all these "logical bullshit debates" because these discussions do not seem to be fruitful; some were merely interpreting historical documents differently (Hayashi 1995:16-22).

[12] Local elite members refuse to be voiceless subjects in the study of locality and ethnicity. They participate in the construction of what they understand is a new and a more rational form of knowing reality, sincerely believing that they are clarifying the distortions of previous research and in an attempt to justify their glorious past. It is true that historical evidence is of importance for characterising ethnicity, but it is not the only way of defining a common history but rather a way of defining the context of ethnogeneis itself (Lehman 1979). The greatest significance of Bai studies is to recover the lost sense of superiority, if it is not to dominate Bai studies, rather than to scrutinise historical facts.

[13] As spelt out by a young Bai, Yang Jingyin (2002) in his article "Ethnicity is an important resource that can be made use of".

their ID documents have secured their *minzu* status permanently; there is no need to protect the boundary. Moreover, they are the ones who move comfortably between the Bai and Han. Most of them stand out among their Bai fellows for their better education or position in the work place, while their Bai status distinguishes them from the Han, which enables them to take advantage of affirmative action plans when perceived opportunities become available. Their countrymen identify them as Bai and feel proud of them; they identify themselves as Bai and also feel proud of their history and culture. Whenever there is any contradiction or confusion in local history or cultural studies, their stance is always clear: side with the Bai.

As will be illustrated in this chapter, their strong attachment to the Bai label is visible, although not all of them are extremists in this. Bai studies by the Bai have put an end to the situation of well-educated Bai working only on pan-Chinese literature or history, and have challenged studies of the Bai that tended to present only one side of the story, i.e., the Hanisation (Sinicisation) of the Bai.

How then are we to see the local elite? Are they political brokers, state agents or subaltern voices (see Siu 1989:10)? It is hard to choose one option at any one time, as they may have multiple roles. The following sections will display how they express Bai Identity in Bai studies.

3.2 The play of difference

Bai studies centre round two themes: the origin of the Bai and local history. As discussed in the previous chapters, the Bai category was determined by socio-

political forces and historical texts,[14] yet Bai Identity is not any sort of forced consciousness; it works at the level of the local elite besides that of the state in the NECP.[15] The local elite turn to local history to locate what can be represented as the history of the Bai, which means the need to prove the indigenousness of the Bai and their past glories in the Nanzhao (752-902AD) and Dali kingdoms (938-1382). Historical texts are often cited as evidence of who the Bai were, ignoring the fact that these texts can be problematic and Han-centric.[16] This section will introduce theories in, and phases of, Bai studies before going into details of origin studies and local history studies.

3.2.1 Theoretical development of Bai studies

After the NECP, when the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBAP) was established in 1956, the Bai as a separate group stood on shaky ground in the minds of most people in Yunnan because nobody had proposed a *Baizu* identity and there was no group recorded as *Baizu* in historical texts in spite of the different terms referring to a Bai people. Where the Bai came from became a big research issue that boosted the first phase of Bai studies. In Chapter One (1.2.1), I discussed three

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[14] By "historical texts" I mean history books (including unofficial ones), local gazetteers, genealogies, tombstone inscriptions and temple records.

[15] The Bai have written a lot about themselves, the most common endeavour is to recompile genealogies among villagers.

[16] Lien Juichih (2003) suggests being cautious about data produced after the 15th century in Dali since the first Ming ruler burned all the archives there in Dali (pp.17-20). Under such circumstances, even state-sanctioned ethnographies and gazetteers rely heavily on oral tradition and surviving copies (p. 140). Once data is recorded in history books, it is often assumed to be the truthfully documented history.

theories proposed by external researchers on the origin of the Bai. This section focuses on the elaborations and expansions conducted by Bai researchers, more importantly, their priorities and logic even where they are supporting the same theory.

Five theories of the origin of the Bai have been proposed in Bai studies. The most strongly held and persistent of these is the native theory (cf. 1.2.1). "Native theory" claims that Bai are natives to Dali and were the first inhabitants along the Erhai Lake in Dali (see Ma Yao 1957, Duan Dingzhou 1998: forewards). Most Bai scholars align with native theory[17], but admit at the same time the hybridity in the Bai population, which is not contradictory in their logic. Native theory does not exclude hybridity and is basically a claim of original settlement and a weapon against other theories.

The second theory that emerged is the "northwest-origin", or *diqiang,* theory, which suggests that the Bai are part of *diqiang* who migrated from northwest China.[18] Since *diqiang* have generally been accepted as the ancestors of the Yi (*Lolo*),[19] some of the Bai elite go into great detail to denounce the northwest-origin (*diqiang*) theory.

The third theory is Han-origin. Some early non-Bai researchers (see 1.2.1) have proposed that the Bai were actually Han migrants since Zhuang Qiao and his troops settled in the area in the Han dynasty (206BC – 220AD). Some current historians

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[17] According to Hayashi (1995:2), most Japanese scholars also take a native-origin stance.

[18] See Zhang Xilu 1990, 1992; Wang Shuwu 1986, 1990; Shan Wen 1990; Chen Yan, 1990. It must be pointed out here that my own interviews with some Yi elites in Yunnan show that they tend to deny the *diqiang* origin and insist on their nativeness.

[19] You Zhong (non-Bai) concluded that the *diqiang* were the first people in Yunnan and that these pioneers diffused into different Yi-language ethnic groups (1982, 1994).

have drawn similar conclusions based on Bai language studies (see Qin Fengqiang 1957a, 1957b). Han-origin theory proposes a model of 'Han immigrants marrying local indigenous women and becoming Bai,' and recognises some indigenized Han in the Bai stock, subtly pointing to the fact that the Bai actually originated from the Han.[20]

The Tai-origin theory is the fourth theory. According to this theory, the Tai established the Nanzhao kingdom. First proposed by Western explorers in the 19th century (e.g. Terrien de Lacouperie (1969 [1886]) and E.H. Parker), the Tai-origin theory was once taken for granted in European-composed histories of the region, but rejected by American scholars (see Notar 1999:59-61) and not counted as a theory by young historians, such as Hayashi (1995:4, 6) who only takes four theories into his consideration.[21] This thesis brings in the Tai-origin theory because it has been significant in stimulating Bai studies and the debates regarding who established the Nanzhao kingdom (752-902 AD) in the 1980s among Bai elite.

The last theory is a theory of hybridity widely held by Bai (Du Yijian 1957, Ma Yao 1990, 1992, 2000; Li Zhengqing 1998:169) and non-Bai scholars (see 1.2.1 for detail).[22] The "hybridity theory" is that the Bai are composed of a mixture of

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[20] For a historical study on ethnicity and Han Chinese picking up indigenous cultural practices during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, see Crossley et. al (2006a).

[21] A couple of Chinese researchers also followed early Western writers (Yang Kun 1957). However, in the 1930s-1940s most non-Bai Chinese historians such as Fang Guoyü, Ling Chunsheng, Jiang Yinliang and Xu Yunqiao condemned the Thai-origin theory, see Hayashi (1995:4) for more. In addition, after the 1950s, native Bai researchers added their own voice (not strictly in an academic sense) to the criticisms (also see Hayashi 1995:4).

[22] This hybridity has been observed by western authors too. Davies (1970[1909]:344) was amazed by the mixed nature of the Min-chia (part of the Bai) race based on the mixed language they spoke, even

different peoples at different times in history. The hybridity theory can be traced in the work of many Bai writers although they do not identify with it directly except for Ma Yao, the well-known Bai scholar, who embraced the hybridity theory in the late 1990s (see details below). All the Bai scholars I have read and interviewed readily accept the native theory, yet they are ambiguous: they often draw on hybridity theory to support their native theory stance; and when they support hybridity theory, they often reach a native theory conclusion. One informant's remarks are a good case in point:

> We all insist on the native theory, I mean there is no doubt about this, but we mean there are different degrees in that Bai spectrum. The question is how many of the Bai ancestors were native, what was the *percentage* of the native in that Bai stock, and what was the percentage of indigenized Han and other native peoples? I would say that the majority were native Bai. I can show you historical records to support this point.[23]

Bai studies can be divided into three phases, corresponding with major political, social and economic changes in China. As mentioned earlier, the first wave hit at the very beginning of everything: the designation of the Bai as a group and the setting up of the Bai autonomous prefecture. The second phase in the late 1980s came at a time when researchers were facing publication pressure from a nationwide academic standardization drive. To achieve the status of literati has been a goal for generations, even during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) when most of the higher education infrastructure was closed down. Since the 1990s, to obtain a professorship or

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when the locals claimed to him that their ancestors came from Nanjing.

[23] Fieldwork data, summer 2003.

maintain one's researcher status, publication has been a major way up the literati ladder. Under this pressure, the older generation published what they had written in the 1950s, while younger researchers followed up earlier research topics and published in journals.[24]

In the local political landscape, it was the same. The ability to trace local history and carry out Bai studies became a new skill and expertise which could attract the respect and admiration of one's fellows and reinforce one's position in the government. The third wave started after 1990 when some Bai started to reflect on the ways they had reconstructed local history. Since the 1990s, the promotion of tourism, especially ethno-tourism (see Doorne et al 2003, Morais et al. 2005), and the continued/increasing pressure for researchers to produce publications has boosted new incentives in Bai studies. The new socio-political environment provided the local elite with more agency: they could reflect, modify or even criticise what had been done in the 1950s and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). They made new use of their social positions and knowledge.

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[24] A milestone in the third wave is the compiling and reprinting of all the published articles on Bai studies as hard-cover serials. Opinions concerning the reprinting of these works among Bai elite differ, but this milestone indicates that the prefecture government is taking up a new role: to patronize Bai studies. This new development demonstrates the power of local political elites.

Table 5: Development of Bai studies

	Time	Major participants	Concerns	Debate topics	National context	Publications
1st wave	1956-1957	Bai and Han researchers	to legitimate the official Bai label	*Wuman* vs. *Baiman*	the NECP	*Yunnan Daily* Sept. 4th & 7th, Oct. 27th & 29th; Yang Kun (ed.): (1957)
2nd wave	1980s	Bai elite	status vis-à-vis Han, Yi and Tai	Nanzhao royal family, big lineage surnames and genealogy	Post cultural revolution, revitalisation of cultural studies	*Dali Culture**
3rd wave	post-1990s	Bai elite	for gaining publications	excavated material	Economic reform and promotion of tourism with emphasis on Bai culture and history	*Bai Studies*

* The first issue of *Dali Culture* came out in 1979 with 3000 copies. In 1996, the journal was awarded with best journal in social science by the provincial government (Yin Mingju 2001/11:156).

From a Morgan-Marxist evolutionist perspective, the researchers involved all agree that the Bai population has never been static, and that the formation of the Bai is fluid and in constant change.[25] Although totally isolated from Western theories and ignorant of Leach, Barth, A. Cohen and Keyes at that time, they nevertheless located the Bai in close relation to other peoples, especially the Han and the Yi, who have historically or geographically mingled in the region.

Of the five theories, "native theory" was the foundation theme in the three waves and was promoted strongly against the northwest-origin, Han-origin and Tai-origin theories. The northwest-origin (*diqiang*) theory was strongly denounced and ushered in discussion of the Nanzhao royal family. It seems to me that they did not want to lose this glorious past to the Yi. The Han-origin theory had the least support but received both serious attention and denunciation since the Han-origin theory was seen as hindering the construction of Bai ethnicity. Yet Han-origin theory foreshadowed the meticulous studies on surnames and Bai language studies in the second wave. The Tai-origin theory did not attract much attention because, in the eyes of the Bai elite, it was groundless. Most importantly, the Tai-origin theory does not really jeopardise the claims to a unique Bai ethnicity.

The hybridity theory did not draw much attention either, since it did not contribute sufficient evidence to support the Bai claim to be a separate *minzu*. Yet the hybridity theory has seemed to be a solution that can end the debate in an acceptable way, especially since the 1990s when the notion of the Bai as a separate *minzu* group was fully institutionalised within and outside the *Baizu* category. A hybridity theory

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[25] See Wang Shuwu (王叔武 1957:1), Wang Zhong(1958:45), Fang Guoyü (1957a, b&c), Yang Kun (1957), Yang Shucai (1957), Qin Fengxiang (1957b).

provides a middle ground where native theory stands out without excluding other theories. Broadly speaking, before the 1970s, native theory was an early version of hybridity theory with the emphasis on the melding of different peoples in Dali. Later on, some started to look at a theory of hybridity with renewed interest and pushed the theory further by arguing that the Bai were the major proportion in the hybridity. Hybridity becomes a metaphor when they talk about the Bai people and Bai culture. Their point is: there is a Bai ethnic group and a unique Bai culture no matter how mixed the origin is.

While Bai studies has experienced changes of socio-political context, there has not been much progress in theorisation since the 1990s. The research themes and perspectives have been the same as in the 1950s and 1980s. A strong drive for identity-building has been constantly formulated and reiterated through the development of these theories. The next two sections will review some of the topics frequently discussed: *wuman/baiman* debates over Bai origins, and issues related to the history of the Nanzhao royal family and Bai language. Sometimes, the same data and argument are used vis-à-vis different peoples, but if we tap into the underlying motivation of these seemingly trivial debates, we will see all these elites have been doing is to utilise available resources in local historical and linguistic studies to establish the validity of Bai Identity and to display their Bai identities.

3.2.2 Origin studies[26]

If we consider Bai researchers in their social contexts, we will not be confused by all their endless debates over Bai origins (see Hayashi 1995:16-48 for his frustration), not surprised by why they often make "incorrect conclusions" (Hayashi 1995:48).

Since 1956, the question of Bai origin has always been controversial and has yet to be resolved. Bai elite have been seeking their own explanations ever since. The aim of this section is not to trace an authentic Bai origin or to authorise a 'real' Bai history, but to show how Bai origin studies have become a way of making and being Bai.

As mentioned earlier, Bai studies started after the NECP when a Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (DBPA) was first established in 1956, and the Bai as a whole gained dominance in the local political domain.[27] The Bai include those who call themselves *minjia.* Whatever historians may say otherwise, the *minjia* were assumed to be originally Han migrants even by those who called themselves *minjia*. This is to say that the Bai could not be ethnically distinctive when they were assumed to be Han immigrants. So to justify the political dominance of the 'autonomous Bai' in Dali prefecture became crucial. It became essential for Bai intellectuals to examine

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[26]In oral tradition and state-sanctioned historical documents, it is often repeated that the Bai ancestors originated from the ancient Ai-lao people. See Lien (2003:77-78, 91-95). As will be elaborated in chapter seven, Ai-lao origin was given central position in tourism exhibitions in the late 1990s. According to Schafer (1967:67), the Ai-lao people were partly Hanised in the Tang (618-907) dynasty. Other oral traditions regarding an Asoka origin or Avalokitesvara origin (see Lien 2003) were brushed aside.

[27] This was because of their weaker political position before the 1950s (see Sutton 1970) and the low proportion of Bai people.

the origins of the Bai and to support the notion that the Bai were the first inhabitants in Dali.

Available archives about people in southwest China can be dated back to the Han dynasty (206BC - 220AD), yet there was no group monolithically identifiable as Bai forefathers. Heated discussions on the origin of the Bai appeared in the *Yunnan Daily* during the mid-1950s.[28] This is often referred to as the 1957 debate because these articles were compiled into a book entitled *On the Formation and Development of the Bai People* (Yang Kun 1957)[29]. On a national scale, Wang Shuwu (1957/4:1-18) published an article "On the Origin of the Bai" in the prestigious journal *History Studies*; another article titled "Challenges to 'On the Origin of the Bai'" appeared in the same journal the following year (see Wang Zhong 1958).[30] All the five theories described above emerged at this stage and laid the foundation for further research that has lasted for half a century. The 1957 debate is significant in that the Bai acquired Bai Identity in academia and confirmed their position as one of the 55 *shaoshu minzu* categories.

Regardless of the theoretical orientations and *minzu* backgrounds of researchers, two important outcomes of the 1957 debates were that researchers "all agreed that the Bai are a separate *minzu* group composed of both *wuman* and *baiman,*" with

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[28] First led by non-Bai ethno-historians such as Yang Kun and Fang Guoyü, but later on voices from the Bai become stronger and dominated eventually.

[29] It is interesting to point out here that a similar volume on the origin of the Han was compiled the same year in the same way. See *On the Formation of Han Minzu* (《汉族形成问题讨论集》, 生活·读书·新知 三联书店出版. 1957. 北京)

[30] These two articles were reprinted in *Yunnan Local History Forum* in 1986. A few individual researchers also published studies on Bai origins elsewhere in China (see Ren 1957) and in an authoritive state newspaper which circulates nationwide: *The Guangming Daily*.

"advanced cultural achievements" (Ren Fang 1957:186),[31] and that the first inhabitants along Erhai Lake were both *wuman* and *baiman*. Yet before this solution was sorted out, a lot of debate went on for some time.

Research findings about different peoples in Dali in the 1940s showed that the Yi (not Bai) were the first native people (settlers) in Dali. Ling Chunsheng (a non-Bai) and Jiarui[32] (whom my informants take to be Bai) concluded that *wuman* (black barbarians) and *diqiang* were the first inhabitants of Dali, which means that the Yi rather than the Bai ancestors were the first inhabitants because both *wuman* and *diqiang* were assumed before the 1980s to be the ancestors of the Yi. Both local Bai and non-Bai researchers mustered all the historical evidence they could find to prove that the Bai ancestors, presumably *baiman* (white barbarians), were the first inhabitants along Erhai lake, and that they were the local ruling class even if they were not founders of the Nanzhao kingdom (752-902 AD). All these studies relied

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[31]Also see Lin Chaomin (1985b), a non-Bai historian who holds that predecessors of the Bai did not come into being until the middle and late period of the Tang Dynasty when both the two broad and vague labels *wuman* and *baiman* disappeared from historical documentation. Elsewhere Lin Chaomin (2001) explicitly spells out that "it was Nanzhao that precipitated the formation of the Bai rather than the Bai who set up Nanzhao". Lin locates a quasi-Bai Identity formulated after 877AD among the 'big white people' (*dafengren)* of the 'big white state'.

[32] Ling was a French-trained ethno-linguist who conducted his fieldwork in 1938; *wuman* and *baiman* in the Tang dynasty (618-907) was his focus. Xu was originally from Dali but never identified with the Bai overtly, if ever, although my informants repeated to me "Xu was Bai for sure." Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:17) asserts that Dali culture comes from the northwest and *diqiang* culture formed its core. Xu thinks that Dali culture absorbs part of Chu (475-221 B.C.) culture (from central China). Quite a number of the local populations are descendants from Chu general Zhuang Qiao (who ruled the area with his troops). These people later become the big lineages among the Bai called *minjia*.

heavily on historical texts and interpretations of these texts.[33] The validity of such texts was seldom questioned, and no one ever mentioned that there was no group label corresponding to what we call Bai. Most Bai scholars aligned with the native theory, claiming that the Bai were the first inhabitants along the Erhai Lake.[34]And they were careful about mentioning *wuman* because it was generally accepted among Bai researchers that *wuman* were the predecessors of the Yi people.

It later became clear after the debate that the confusion between *wuman* and *baiman* was partly due to a Yuan (1368-1644) ethnographer, Li Jing, who asserted that *wuman* were the ancestors of the Yi; *baiman*, of the Bai. Li Jing's problematic division was taken for granted[35] and affected origin studies in the direction of

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[33] The most popular historical documentations include: *An Ethnography of Southwest Barbarians* (《西南夷志》by Si Maqian (approximately 145/135BC-90/86BC), *Man Shu* (《蛮书》, *the Book of Barbarians*) by Fan Chuo in 863AD, *Nanzhao Stele* (《南诏德化碑>an inscribed stone relic still kept today which was drafted by *Zhen Hui*, a Han Chinese who was captured in the military conflict between the Tang Court (618-907) and Nanzhao Kingdom (752-902AD), the *New Tang History: Nanzhao Part* (《新唐书·南诏传》 by Ou Yangxiu (1007-1072). *The history of Dali Kingdom in The History of the Song Dynasty* (《宋史·大理国传》). *A Short Ethnography of Yunnan* (《云南志略》)by Li Jing in Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) and *Yuan History* (by Song Lian in Ming dynasty (1368-1644). *Dali Travelogue* (《大理行记》)by Guo Songnian in Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). Local gazetteers include 《大理府志》 and 《云南通志》 by local Bai scholar Li Yuanyuang (1479-1580), 《滇系》 by Shifan (1751-1811), 《云南通志》 and 《南昭野史》 by Bai scholar Wang Song (1752-1837). Such texts are taken as historical evidence that has been quoted repeatedly for five decades.

[34] Available historical records document the first inhabitants as *wuman* and *baiman*. Consequently, an origin controversy centres around who the *wuman* and *baiman* are.

[35] See Wang Yuanfu (1981), Zhang Xilu (1990[1983]). It must also be pointed out that Bai elite are not alone in holding this stance. As mentioned earlier, Ling Chunsheng (1938) (non-Bai) made the first contemporary conclusion. You Zhong (1990:125, 127) (non-Bai) still insists on this stance when writing about the local history of Yunnan.

arguing that *baiman* rather than *wuman* were the first inhabitants. Li's division was first challenged by a non-Bai historian, Fang Guoyü, who pointed out that the *wuman* were not necessarily Yi and the *baiman* are not necessarily Bai, and that these two loose terms may have referred to different peoples in different places at different times during the Tang dynasty (618-907). Furthermore, the two categories were not ethnonyms (Fang Guoyü 1957c).[36] However, many Bai researchers have ignored Fang's work and rejected any alternative explanations.[37]

Considering the motivations behind the debate, I find it easy to understand why Fang's findings were ignored. Studies over *wuman* and *baiman* were more about who the first inhabitants of Dali were rather than who *wuman* and *baiman* really were. Finally, those who participated in the debate concluded that the Bai are a separate *minzu* group composed of both *wuman* and *baiman*. This is not enough to exclude the Yi totally, but efficiently disqualifies the Yi as the first inhabitants.[38]

The most significant work in origin studies is the self-reflection of Ma Yao. Ma Yao's academic "confession" regarding his earlier positions in Bai origin studies shows that he shifted from native theory to hybridity theory over time. For this, Ma

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[36] Unfortunately, Fang's very detached and historical study did not arouse adequate attention at that time, although his point was elaborated by other non-Bai historians such as Lin Chaomin (1985a, 1985b) and Wang Wenguang (1997: 266-293), and Bai researchers such as Li Xuelong (1993/3:99), Ma Yao (1995) and Duan Dingzhou (1998/8).

[37] According to gossip I heard, some outside researchers had won the locals' favour by writing affirmatively or assertively about Bai-ness.

[38]The often cited examples include excavated tiles with characters on it and the unearthed copper coffins in most of the works with the intention of differentiating the Bai from other ethnic groups, mainly the Yi. For an elaboration of the Yi (Lolo) as a higher social and physically distinct group, see Goullart (1955). Note the black *Lolos* under Goullart's pen are mostly under the current pan-Yi category.

Yao was chided as a "traitor to the Bai people" behind his back in a half-serious way[39]. Ma Yao (1998) expressed his theoretical position as follows:

> The complexity of the situation has driven me to keep changing my opinions [theoretical orientation] all the time. Between 1956-1957, I was arguing for the native theory based on *Shiji.* In the 1970s, I adopted Wang Shuwu's argument,[40] arguing that the Bai were formed from a mixture of several local ethnic minorities. In 1980 when I was working on *A Short History of the Bai People*, I hinted that the Bai were native people around Erhai Lake based on some archaeological findings discovered between 1973-1974. In 1992, in an article entitled "On the Hybrid and Diverse Nature of Yunnan *Minzu* Groups" published in *Guangxi Minzu Studies* (vol.3), I proposed that the Bai people's origin is hybrid, that is to say Bai people are from diverse ethnic backgrounds who finally homogenized into what they are today.

It is worthwhile noting that these changes of opinion do not reduce Ma's pride in Bai culture. On several occasions, he (2002[1995,1998]) asserts that Dali Bai culture[41] is the source of Yunnan civilization and also an entity that has integrated different local cultures.[42]

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[39] Fieldwork interview 2003.

[40]This Wang Shuwu is another Bai scholar王叔武 rather than the王树五. I mention elsewhere. These two persons' synonymous names are written with different Chinese characters.

[41] The term "Dali Bai culture" has been frequently and widely used. Ma Yao repeatedly states that Bai culture has been developing side by side with Han culture and has contributed to an important part of the overall Chinese culture (1994, 1995, 1998). Yin Mingju (2001/11:156), former director of Dali Cultural Bureau, defines Bai culture as "a regional culture that has integrated diverse cultural ingredients such as Han, local Bai, Yi other ethnic minorities and some Southeast Asian cultures since the Nanzhao and Dali periods. It is a culture that derives from Han but with strong local characteristics." As stated before, there are more similarities than differences due to long-term interactions between the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities. What is important here is that the adoption of Han Chinese cultural traits does not necessarily result in Hanisation or loss of Bai Identity;

Here I'd like to discuss how ordinary Bai people perceive their origin. When asked, nine out of ten claim that their ancestors come from Nanjing (one of the eastern coastal cities).[43] Many Bai scholars I interviewed sneer that these claims simply echo each other in a circular way and that such claims can be dated back to the Tang Dynasty (618-906) in the first Yunnan Ethnography.[44] I assume such claims are not groundless since the first Han migrants arrived during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). However, one of my informants (82 years old, educated, Colour village) insists:

> People here are all natives, those who emigrated from Sichuan, Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang [provinces] were indigenized [Bai-ised] upon arrival. Those who married local women became Bai right away. Their genealogies [referring to those that claim a Nanjing origin] are mere constructions and echoes of fictions, we are natives, and this can be found in historical legends.

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it just adds levels and layers to the Bai Identity.

[42] Such statements project Dali Bai culture to the centre of a provincial or even a larger regional level. Ma Yao's remarks (cited above) are a kind of echo of Fei Xiaotong's "from diversity to unity" theory (*duo yuan yi ti*) in studying the stock of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*) (Fei 1991b). The idea of "*yi ti*" that Fei is talking about has been a theme reiterated in official rhetoric since the Sui (580-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties (see Guan Yanbo 2001).

[43] See David Faure (1989) who argues that these legends of origin are associated with rights of settlement, tax, etc. As mentioned in chapter one, such claims can be found in Fan Chuo's *The Book of the Barbarians* (863AD), Chinese quotes and citations of Fan Chuo are numerous. For similar claims made at different times in the English literature, see Davies (1970[1909]:344), Fitzgerald (1941:70), F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:17), Yokoyama Hiroko (1991) and among some neighbouring *Lolopo* by Mueggler (2001:112). During interviews with local scholars, none of my Bai elite interviewees would ever deny that Han influence has been obvious and strong, and that Han migrants are an important ingredient in the Bai population. However, some people also claim that their ancestors come from the north; as a result, they still maintain other customs such as wearing the bell-like wool cloak (as Goullart, 1955:129 who describes the *boa*), cremation and other traditions of ancient *qiang* people (Zhou Xing, non-Bai, 1991).

[44] See *Man Shu* (the Book of Barbarians) vol. 5 by Fan Chuo (from Lin Chaomin 1985a).

Ma Yao's shifts in his theoretical orientation exemplify what origin studies have been through. Theoretical confrontations with the Yi, Han and the Tai,[45] and insecure Bai Identity have led to some of the "incorrect conclusions," as Hayashi (1995:48) points out. And the strong attitudes of the elites have wide social roots among commoners.

3.2.3 Local history studies

Local history has been another central topic in Bai studies, which is closely connected to who the Bai were and what roles they played in local history. Bai elite have tried to prescribe a Bai formula by writing local history as *Bai* history.

Challenges to the Bai's claim of original settlements (see Faure 1989) and Bai domination in local history emerged when a Yi scholar, Liu Raohan ([1954/2] 1980), reprinted his article claiming that the Nanzhao royal family were Yi.[46] Liu's article was caught up in the flow of studies on Chinese *minzu* which appeared for several reasons, including the fact that much of the research done in the 1950s had no chance to be published until the 1980s, when the suppression of *minzu* identity during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and censorship of academic research was removed.

[45] Tai refers to all speakers of Tai languages.

[46]Before Liu, early historians and ethnographers offered different views. For instance, Lin Huixiang (1993[1939]:275) (non-Bai) refers to Nanzhao as being established by "*boshan*", also called Tai-Shans who had been living along the Yangzi river, very mixed with the Han and influenced by both Han and Indian cultures (262-63). Harrell (1995b) also assumes that the predecessors of the Yi were most probably Nanzhao rulers. An article questioning Liu directly in its title did not appear until four decades later (see Yang Ruihua 1997).The Yi elites are not as outspoken or as numerous as the Bai, but Liu Yaohan's influence is nationwide. In addition to the Yi and Bai, the Naxi and Dai also claim to have been rulers of the Nanzhao Kingdom.

Local historical studies focused on the Nanzhao royal family, mainly its ethnicity, the Tibeto-Burman naming system that the royal family practiced, the big lineage surnames (which entail studies on the origin of Bai surnames), and whether or not a Bai written tradition ever existed. All these topics were explored frequently to denounce northwest-origin, Han-origin and Tai-origin theories vis-à-vis the Han, Yi and Tai.

The most controversial question in local history studies was whether the Nanzhao royal family was Yi, Tai or Bai. As discussed above, in the section on origin studies, local researchers all emphasised that the first people who lived around Erhai lake were Bai ancestors. These researchers interrogated historical material for evidence to back up their claim. The Nanzhao (752-902 AD) and Dali (938-1382) kingdoms were claimed as part of local Bai history.

More importantly, these particular periods in local history were part of Bai Identity. There was no dispute over the fact that the Bai forefathers established the Dali kingdom, but this was not the case with the Nanzhao kingdom. Controversy over whether the Nanzhao royal family were Bai, Yi (*Lolo*) or Tai started among researchers from different parts of the world and with different research traditions and political implications.[47] Vis-à-vis the Yi and the Thai, studies of the Nanzhao royal family centred on ethnicity and the official language used.

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[47] Amphay Doré presented an article supporting the Tai-origin theory at The Fourth International Conference on Thai Studies during 11-13 May 1990 in Kunming, but did not get much attention from the Chinese participants. Davies (1970[1909]:333) sees the royal family as Shan. Fitzgerald (1941:70) states that Nanzhao "was more probably Shan than Min chia". Since Fitzgerald's work was not translated till the late 1980s into Chinese, he was not well known among local scholars by 1980 and so did not receive much attention. Local historical documents focus on the relationship between the

Studies of the Nanzhao royal family have also concentrated on the patronymic linking (Tibeto-Burman naming system) of the royal family, which was used to refute Liu Raohan's reprinted (1954) article and to argue that the Nanzhao royal family were Bai. The following are four examples.

Zhang Xilu (1983) has argued that the Nanzhao royal family were Bai people and had a combination of Han surnames with a classic Tibeto-Burman name.[48] Zhang points out that the three texts Liu provides do not bear any surname at all. So Zhang concludes that the Nanzhao royal family's genealogy was in the same format as Bai genealogies.[49]

In a much more reasoned and disciplined way, Zhang Xu (1984) observed[50] that this system is actually common to different peoples and it differs slightly from group to group.[51] Zhang Xu also questions the credibility of the texts that Liu provided by

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Nanzhao Royal family and Buddhism, intended to explain the origin of royal authority and power and blood links with some sacred sources (see Lien Juichih 2003: 104-06). But for Bai historians, what really matters is their ethnic background. It is hard to check out the 'real' historical facts, but it is important to see the shift of focus and different interpretations at different times in history and by different researchers. Although much ignored among local Bai writers, archaeologist Ling Chunsheng (non-Bai) in 1938 concluded that the royal family of Nanzhao were *Lolo*. Li Lincan came to the same conclusion in 1967 (see Lien Juichih 2003:60 for details).

[48] To make his voice heard, Zhang reprinted the same article in another book he edited in 1990.

[49] He mentions that of all the Chinese ethnic minorities, only the Russian in the north and Yao in Liannan Guangdong also had the same modified Tibeto-Burman naming system. This is dubious. However, he still claims impetuously and without hesitation that such a system is unique to Bai culture.

[50] Zhang Xu makes his criticism clear by asking why, since the surname of the Nanzhao royal family is "Meng", their surname is not included. For a list of these bizarre and incomplete records. For studies on Nanzhao royal family genealogy, see also Yang Yongxin et. al (1986).

[51]Wang Yuanfu (1981, 1986) also holds the same view. This naming customs also are to be found in master-apprentice relationships, and old and new villages. For a detailed discussion on the connecting-naming system among ethnic minorities in Yunnan, see Wang Wenguang (1995a) (non-Bai).

pointing out that different versions of the first six generations of the Nanzhao kings exist. Besides, the genealogy that Liu provided includes names of brothers of the kings, which is at odds with the fact that the Nanzhao royal family only documented the names of those who succeeded to the throne. Yang Yongxin and Zhao Yinsong address this issue directly in an article entitled "On the Ethnicity of the Nanzhao Royal Family" (1986). The two Bai researchers argue that a legend shows that the Nanzhao royal family are Bai, which can also be verified in some genealogies that record the royal family.[52]

From an evolutionist perspective, Wang Yuanfu (1981,1986) assumes:

> After acquiring *advanced culture* [emphasis added] and socio-economic development, old family or clan boundaries fell apart, and connected paternal naming was no longer necessary. Its extinction can be found among many Yi just as among the Bai (except for those Bai who live in the west of Yunnan).

These four examples indicate that the attitudes of the writers are more revealing than the research findings. Most Bai researchers admit that the Nanzhao kingdom had Yi founders, but they insist that the ruling class were Bai, or *baiman* as a few of them still maintain.

The study of the naming system of the Nanzhao royal family entails the study of prominent lineage surnames (*daxing* 大姓) during the Nanzhao-Dali periods (752-

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According to the legend, it was *Zhang Le Jing Qiu,* a local ruler taken as Bai, who gave his throne to the Yi founder of Nanzhao Kingdom when the former saw some heavenly signs. Knowing how dubious genealogies can be, Bai researchers choose not to question the credibility of such genealogies.

[52]For an examination of the legend, see Xiang Da (1954) and Zhao Kantong (2003:134). For a discussion of the fictive nature of Chinese genealogies, see Faure (1987, 1989).

1382),[53] and such studies generally end up in discussions of the origin of Bai surnames[54] and of Bai-Han differences. The study of Bai surnames tends to show the surnames not only derive from Han immigrants or the imperial courts but also from totemism (Zhang Xu 1990).[55] Zhan Chengxu et al. (1990:85) argue that the Bai had their own surnames before the Han's arrival because Tibeto-Burmese 'Bai' surnames are found in historical documents and tombstone inscriptions during the Nanzhao (752-902AD) and Dali (938-1382) kingdoms before these names disappeared in the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasty archives.

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[53] In exploring of lineage formulation, David Faure (1989) insightfully saw the orthodoxy strongly aligned with an official culture regarded as a standard, and that preserving genealogies went beyond the tracking of settlement rights, which is different from his later (1999:271) observation in the New Territories. Regarding the *daxing,* Lien Juichih has a slightly different explanation. Lien discusses the hierarchical relationship displayed through surname- granting of the imperial courts to local power (2003:63-67). It is often pointed out to me that the first few generations in many genealogies do not have surnames (indicating they were native people, see Wang Song's genealogy, p.158), and that surnames were picked up later, or simply as an assimilation by the Han. This change makes it possible to claim both ethnic origins; currently they all identify with the Bai.

[54] Surnames are a critical premise of those who claim to have some social status; the first surnames of the local people in a peripheral area in the imperial era carry political implications. Surnames are symbols of power and legitimacy from the imperial courts. As Lien (2003:310) argues, it is the need to integrate local powers rather than the need to diffuse Han Chinese culture that leads to the granting of surnames to local elites. However, there is a difference in the timeline between Lien's historical perspective and my research, Lien's 10th to 15th century data show claims of India or Guanyin origin, yet my interviewees and research focus mostly on post-15th century context and my interviewees' claims are mostly of Han Chinese origin. See also Faure (1989).

[55] Zhang Xu's data were collected in the 1950s and 1960s. His data classifies, for instance, the *na, luo, lu* (那,罗,陆) as tiger-totem clans) and *ji, xi, gao, huang* (姬,纪,奚,高,黄) as the cock-totem clans. Zhang Xu puts the *hei, gao, xi* (黑, 高,奚) under the latter category. The *mu, duan, bai, wang* (木, 段, 白,王), who claim that their ancestors come from trees), are grouped with the *mu* (wood)-totemists (see Zhang Xu, 1990: foreword). Zhang Xilu (1990[1983]) made similar points in a very emotional way.

The language used in the Nanzhao period is another arena of debate used to gain ground for the Bai vis-à-vis the Yi. Wang Yuanfu (1981, 1986) thinks it is ridiculous to imagine that the Yi rather than the Bai were the rulers in Nanzhao. His argument is direct: the Yi have their own written language,[56] but the official Nanzhao documents are all in Chinese with some Bai written characters. He argues that if the Nanzhao rulers were Yi, there was no reason not to use their own language.[57]

Bai research topics are not limited solely to language and surnames. To differentiate the Yi further, Wang Yuanfu (1981, 1986) argues that the religious faith of the Nanzhao royal family was Buddhism, and the current Bai people's local deity worship is heavily tainted with Buddhism,[58] while the Yi still practice animism even today. Until recently, disputes over the Nanzhao royal family continued. Notably, there are also voices among the Bai who believe that the Nanzhao kingdom was established by the Yi.[59]

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[56] One thing that needs clarifying is that the Yi in Liangshan should not be grouped with the Yi in Dali areas, and the Yi written form in Liangshan (where the Yi genealogies were produced) is not the same as that in Yunnan.

[57] Wang quotes from *Man Shu* (the Book of Barbarians) that the preference for preserved raw pork meat (a common dish among the Bai tody) is "not only a custom of the *baiman*, but also that of the Nanzhao royal family" (Wang Yuanfu:1981,1986). Yang Zhengye (1994) concludes that the Nanzhao royal family are predecessors of the Bai based on his study of the surnames of some Nanzhao officials. Xu Lin (1995/6) draws the same conclusion with her study on some local placenames.

[58] It must be pointed out that local religious practice shares some features with Confucianism, Daoism and animism. This will be dealt with in later chapters.

[59] Judging from a piece of excavated chop stamp, Xiong Jianping (Yi) (2003) argues that the royal family were Yi. Zhao Kantong (2003:132-135) tracks down the origin of the first Nanzhao king, and confirms that he was local rather than a migrant. Being a Bai himself, Zhao's conclusion implies, rather than saying overtly, that Nanzhao was not established by the Bai (even though this article was published after his death).

As in origin studies, there have been no breakthroughs in studies of local history. The most striking fact is that local Bai elite dominate the debates and the focus of most of them is to make Dali history a Bai history. When most of the local elites look into research issues such as the Nanzhao royal family, the naming system, or the origin of surnames, their interest is not in examining these issues as such, but to find evidence to exclude Yi or Tai or Han in relation to the ethnic affiliation of the Nanzhao royal family. Special attacks on the Tai-origin theory have been made on particular occasions (such as Thai studies conferences).[60]

It seems to me that the writing of Bai history by locally-based Bai elite is a counter-hegemonic historiography, transforming what they present as local history into an institutionalised collective Bai history.

3.3 Bai language debates[61]

Many Chinese writers write about the Bai language (*bai wen*), by which they mean only the Bai written form, while in the early English literature, the "Bai language" often refers to Bai spoken language. Whether there was a Bai written language (rather than a corruption of Chinese characters) is still in debate. Linguistic data explain the contact between locals and the neighbouring peoples, but the

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[60] In the Fourth International Conference on Thai Studies held in Kunming 1990, Zhang Xilu presented another article with similar data (as in 1983). This time, Zhang's target was to refute the Tai-origin theory which indicates that Nanzhao was a Kingdom established by the Tai People. Again the same article was reprinted in another volume he edited (1992:1-18).

[61] Regarding ethnic minority language policies in China, see Enwall (1995b:16-19), Kaup (2000:138-146), Bradley (2001) and Zhou Minglang (2003).

controversy over Bai language shows us how the self-awareness of being Bai prevails in local language studies. There are two concerns in the study of Bai language. One is at which level of linguistic classification Bai should be placed, Tibeto-Burman, Sinitic or a separate Bai have all been suggested.[62] The other is whether or not there is a Bai written form. Regardless of their training in linguistics, many Bai writers have no difficulty in insisting upon a Bai family while linguists still have difficulty in situating Bai within the classical schema of a genetic family tree, either the Tibeto-Burman, or the Sinitic branches of Sino-Tibetan (see Wiersma 1990:40). In one paragraph of his book on Tibeto-Burman languages, James Matisoff (2003:5) mentions that "Baic" is increasingly treated as "just another subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, though one under particularly heavy Chinese contact influence."

What is important in this thesis is that studies of the Bai language have been a key component in Bai studies in supporting native theory against northwest-origin, Tai-origin and Han-origin theories. The Bai language is studied in terms of either the spoken form or the written form. It is the Chinese language penetration of the Bai speech that makes their language different from their Yi and Naxi neighbours, as Wiersma (1990:7) comments.

3.3.1 Bai spoken language [63]

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[62] Qin Fengxiang (1957a&b), Gao Guanyu (1957), Zhou Yuewen (1987), Yang Pinliang (1989), Li Shaoni (1992), Yang Yinxing (1993, 1995).

[63] Goullart (1955:129-30) holds that the Bai language is Mon-Khmer. A contemporary Japanese researcher, Shiratori Yoshiro, echoes this understanding (fromYang Yinxin, 1999). Fitzgerald notices "both the affinities and the wide differences between the two languages [Min Chia and Chinese]" (1941:17). Yet professional linguists conclude that the Bai spoken language mixes elements from Tibeto-Burman, Tai or Mon-Khmer and Chinese on several levels, "but none of these prove a genetic

In daily life, the Bai language was used to mark ethnicity by both elites and commoners in the 1930s (Zhao Shiming 1937, Fitzgerald 1941:13) and also today (Duan Dingzhou 1998: 69). Bai speech has been extensively used in the private domain.[64]

Debates over the Bai spoken language are over whether it should be classified as a Bai, Sinitic or Tibeto-Burman language.[65] The last two suggest a Han or Yi origin. During the NECP, the Bai spoken language was classified officially within the Tibeto-Burman language family, under the Sino-Tibetan language family, though the issue of which branch it belongs to was left "to be identified". According to some Bai researchers (e.g. Gao Guangyu 1957:98; Yang Yinxing 1993), the Bai language as (spoken) used to be listed under the Yi in the Tibeto-Burman language family.[66] This is judged "premature" by many Bai elite who are not happy to be in the Yi language family under the Tibeto-Burman language family and insist there should be a separate Bai branch.[67] But the fact that Bai speech shares a borrowed vocabulary of archaic Chinese loan words makes it difficult to ignore its close ties with Sinitic.[68] So

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affinity"(Ramsey 1987).

[64] Before 1949, half of the ancient town population could speak Han Chinese while fewer than 20% were Han Chinese-speaking in rural areas. As to reading and writing in Chinese, only 10% of township and 5% of rural population had the required capacity (Li Shaoni 1981).

[65] Ramsey (1987:291) pointed out that it is superficial to put the Bai language into a Tibeto-Burman language branch, but he did not offer an alternative answer. He (1987: 290) suggests that the Bai language is of an ancient branch of Sinitic origin, but this hypothesis was never systematically explored (Ramsey 1987:290).

[66] Some Bai also came to this conclusion. See Xu and Zhao (1984:3), Yang Yinxing (1993) and Nie Pusheng (2003) for details.

[67] Yang Yinxing (1993) lists seven different research conclusions on Bai speech.

[68] Ramsey (1987:291) maintains that even before the considerably large stock of borrowed words from the Chinese language, "there are probably still older and less systematic layers of borrowing."

the debates over Bai speech have led to several different conclusions (see Yang Yinxing 1993/3 for detail). Two scholars in the 1930s (whom my informants assumed were Bai) concluded that Bai speech was one of the Han Chinese dialects on the basis of the large number of loan words from the Chinese language (Zhao Shimin 1937). This classification has aroused criticism among the Bai. Many Bai researchers since the 1950s hold that Bai speech should have stood alone as a separate branch (see Li Yifu 1957; Yang Yinxing 1993; Ma Yao 1995, Yang Pinliang 1989, Zhou Yaowen 1987, Li Shaoni 1981, 1995, Shi Zhongli 1998).[69]

In the study of the Bai language, Allen (2004:50) notices that "writers' attitudes may be more important when they conduct their research." Although only an amateur linguist, Henry Rodolph Davies won favour from Chinese ethnologists (mostly non-Bai) both in the 1920s and the 1950s for his work among the people in Yunnan.[70] Yet Davies lost all his favour with Bai researchers in the 1980s due to the fact that his position on the language issue (Davies (1970[1909]:344) was unfavourable to the Bai.[71]

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[69]Almost none of the Bai researchers have access to James Matisoff's recent publication (2003) and his listing of a Baic branch, so their reactions and responses are still to be seen.

[70] American-trained anthropologist Yang Chengzhi thinks Davies is more reliable than Qing (1644-1911) sources, British-trained Ling Chunsheng also sings high praises, see Mullaney (2004: 216-219) for detail.

[71]Davies was criticised as a colonial writer with aggressive imperial purposes. At the level of daily usage, Wiersma (1990:41) discovers that the recent intrusion of modern standardized Chinese through political change has been a relatively minor factor in creating the language the Bai (or the "Bilingual") are using today. A Zhuang researcher, Wei Da (2002) points out that the Zhuang, Bai, Kejia and Hokkien language actually share a lot in common. Stevan Harrell (1989) also mentions that the Mosuo, Lisu, Hani, Naxi and maybe the Bai are closely related linguistically.

Going through their work on Bai spoken language, I find it difficult to locate good evidence to back up their argument. Again the debates over spoken language are all about putting up boundaries and expressing Bai Identity rather than a genuine academic or knowledge pursuit.

3.3.2 The Bai written form

Whether a Bai written form ever existed or not is at the centre of a debate.[72] The Bai written form(*bai wen*) mostly refers to what Enwall calls "the Chinese character-based writing"(1995a:75) and is often called in China *hanzi baidu* (Han characters read in Bai). Within China, Bai writing is often categorised into three forms: words read in Han Chinese (*xun du han zi*), invented ideographs (*zi zao xin zi*) and borrowed vocabulary from Chinese. In this section, I will depict an episode from my fieldwork which reveals how a Bai villager identifies with what he takes to be Bai written form. Then I will proceed to introduce authoritative definitions and definitions by foreign writers that have affected the Bai researchers and their research.

My fieldwork experience gave me the opportunity to see how an ordinary Bai villager defines and practises, in his words, "Bai words".

When people in Colour Village were decorating the altar for their *benzhu* (village patron god) procession in 2004, a man in his 50s came over and started to

[72] This question is most likely to be offensive to the Bai, native Bai historians insist that during the early Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) there were Bai histories written in Bai, although these books can no longer be found. However, these lost books once served as guidelines for Ming (1368-1644) local history compilers such as Li Yuanyuang (1497-1580) and Wang Song (1752-1837) who wrote in Han Chinese (see Ma Yao, 2002[1995,1998] for detail). Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:133-140), on the other hand, regards 'Bai written language' as degraded Chinese language, denying any 'unique local form of writing'.

fold a piece of red paper, skilfully making the big piece of paper into squares and cutting the paper into six strips. Not until then did I realize what he was doing: writing the couplets for the altar. He put the paper on the ground and wrote directly on it with a traditional Chinese black brush-pen. The couplet he wrote had a very well-structured rhythm in beautiful calligraphy. But I found one character "*hong*" in "*hongyang*" was not written correctly, I was struggling over whether or not to reveal the error, and how to let him realise it without his losing face among his fellow villagers. Knowing that the couplets were to be stuck on the wall at the back of the altar and that everyone could see them, I wrote in my notebook the 'correct' word just before he hung them up and showed it to him, thus avoiding attention from others nearby. His reaction was, to my surprise, quite relaxed and comfortable. He told me firmly but in a friendly manner: "Oh, this is the way we Bai people write it, its [*hong*] pronunciation is [*xuan*], we have this word [*xuan-yang*] in Bai language [instead of *hongyang*]." I was left speechless, as he knew what he was doing.

This experience helped me understand why so many Bai insist that there is a Bai written form. They argue that not only Bai intellectuals but also commoners started to use Bai written language between the Nanzhao and the Dali kingdoms.[73]

The authoritative Encyclopaedia of Chinese Vocabulary (*Cihai*辞海) defines *Bai Language*白语 as: "A written form that employs the Han Chinese Characters to record Bai language by Bai intellectuals in history."[74]

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[73]See Wang Yuanfu (1984,1986), Li Shaoni (1981) and Li Donghong (1993, 2000) for more details. They quote Shi Zhong jian, a non-Bai ethno-historian) who proposed that the Bai written language was widely used among local intellectuals, especially local shamans or monks. They used it to make notes before they preached and to interpret religious scriptures for commoners who did not read nor write any Han Chinese, or Sanskrit (Li Donghong 2000).

Following Lacouperie (1969 [1886]), Davies (1970[1909]:344) held that Bai written signs "consist largely of corruptions from the Chinese," while Fitzgerald (1941:15) held that Bai had "never been written down." Quite a few Chinese scholars think that the Bai written tradition is nothing more than a corruption of the Chinese language, which is very common among other *minzu* groups (such as the Miao, see Enwall1995a:75-88). It is important to clarify that the 'Bai written form' is, as Wiersma (1990:31-32) states:

> A standoff among scholars active during that period whether exploitation of the Chinese writing system as a tool for recording texts that only make sense if read by speakers of Bai using their native language,... and it *does* reflect an oral tradition of some antiquity in Bai (emphasis added).

Ramsey notes that the Bai written form "has a large stock of words that can be directly compared to Middle Chinese, the literary standard of the seventh century" (1987:291). In short, Bai written form is a "graph-to-sound decoding that renders the texts readable in Bai" (Wiersma 1990:26). Allan (2005) also finds it necessary to mention the existence of a Bai written tradition.

Ramsey indicates that the future direction of Bai language study is to track if "there are common elements in Bai and Chinese (or some other language) that are older than all such loans and would indicate a shared ancestry" (Ramsey 1987). Yet his Bai colleagues have no interest in seeking any "common elements" or "shared

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[74] Other authoritative sources confirming the existence of a Bai written form include *Ethnic Minority Dictionary* (1989) by Shanghai Dictionary Publishers, and *China Encyclopaedia (Ethnic Minorities)* (1986) by China Encyclopaedia Press (Shi Zhongli 1998).

ancestry" at all. They are only interested in seeking and making distinctiveness. Like history studies, Bai language studies has become one of the sources of Bai Identity.

Within China, the debate over whether or not there is a Bai written form is divided into haves/ayes[75] and have-nots/nays.[76] The proposition that the Bai people had their own written language was initiated by a Jianchuan Bai scholar, Zhao Shiming, in 1937 (see Yang Zhengye 1997/4).[77] You Zhong, a non-Bai ethno-historian, holds that the predecessors of the Bai created their own way of writing by adding or dropping parts of Chinese words, which look like corruption of the Chinese (1982: 171). However, the joint declaration was written in Chinese (1982:170) because it was most widely used[78] or because it was the only language that was intelligible to both parties.[79] Other non-Bai scholars such as Tian Huaiqing (1988) also hold this view. But Wang Yuanfu (1981, 1986) simply questions:

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[75] Zhao Shiming (1937); Yang Kun (non-Bai) (1957); Qin Feng Xiang (1957a&b); Zhao Yinsong (1982); Wang Yuan fu (1981, 1986); Li Donghong (1993, 1996, 2000); Hou Cong (1997); Yang Zhengye (1997); Duan (1998); Yang Yinxin et all (1999); Wang Feng (2002).

[76] Du Yujian (1957); Sun Taikan (1957) and Li Shaoni (1981).

[77]Earlier research on Bai language is about the spoken language rather than the written one (see Du Yijian 1957 for more). Yang also lists a few other Bai scholars since 1911 such as Zhao Fan (1851-1928) and Zhao Shiming (1870-1942) who "contributed tremendously to the study of Bai people").

[78]The Nanzhao administrative structure is a "mimic of the Tang system" (You Zhong 1990:144-67; Guan Yanbo 1993). Nanzhao kings had their own name for each reign, special names for deceased kings as their counterparts in the Tang Court. Nanzhao kings also had hundreds of wives (while their officials can have dozens) and their wives came from the surrounding peoples, including Tang subjects (see Guan Yanbo, 1993 for detail). Guo Songnian visited Dali between 1280 and 1300 and observed that Bai intellectuals used Chinese language fluently to write poems (see Ma Yao 2002[1995, 1998] for this part of history). Guo's travelogue is well cited. An important phenomenon is that all these well-educated Bai elite were proficient in Chinese poetry such as Li Yuanyang (1497-1580), Wang Song (1752-1837).

[79] According to historians, Nanzhao rulers started to learn the Chinese language quite early; King

> If the Nanzhao royal family were *wuman*, and if the Yi written language was already in use officially, how is it there are no relics or remains left?[80] … On the contrary, we have found countless bits of evidence to back up the proposition that the Bai written form was in use for more than a thousand years, and there are some native words [non-Chinese words] in the joint declaration signed by the Dali kingdom king and a Tang court official, which are not Yi but Bai.[81]

To back up the argument that there is a Bai written form, Li Donghong (1993, 1996, 2000) finds Bai writing *was* once used formally in religious practice and Bai opera manuscripts at some point in history.[82] Such research "throws light on the special identification of Bai-speaking people with the Han culture as represented by its writing system" (Wiersma 1990:21), but does not take into consideration their *minzu* identity although it has demonstrated strong Bai Identity. The underlying message of the debate is to de-Hanise (decreolise). Local Bai elite think that *Cihai* is not clear enough about whether there is a Bai written language (*Baizu wenzi*) or not (Li Shaoni 1981). So Wang Yuanfu (1981,1986) argues strongly:

Geluofeng "would read nothing except Confucian books" as recorded on the *Nanzhao Stele*, and Nanzhao kings: Fengjiayi, Yimouxun, Xunmoucuo received their education from a Han captive (Zheng Hui) (Wang Shuwu, 1986, 1990). It is quite likely that Chinese language might well have been the only mutually comprehensible spoken language available despite the existence of a Bai written form at that time.

[80] Here Wang is ignoring the massive burning of all archives in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

[81] It must be noted that Zhao Kantong (2003:134) argues that the joint declaration was a mere fiction since neither *Man Shu* (Book of the Barbarians) nor The Tang History (both old and new editions) recorded anything about this event. But Li Donghong (2000) suggests that both Han and Bai written forms could be found in the declaration.

[82] Recently in the study of Bai dialects, Wiersma also notices "an early local adaptation of Chinese graphs as a native language syllabary for exegetical use in glossing religious texts." (1990:15-16)

> In spite of the similarities between Bai and Han written forms, no matter how many Bai words have been borrowed from the Han language, as long as there are some written characters to express Bai spoken language, there is nothing improper in calling it Bai written language.

Moreover, such debates over language provide Bai scholars with an arena in which to establish their authority and display their academic expertise. In his article, Wang Yuanfu (1981, 1986) corrected a prestigious Han Chinese archaeologist, Prof. Wu Jinding, who mistakenly interpreted some characters on excavated Nanzhao Tiles because Wu did not speak Bai (also see Tian Huaiqing 1988).[83] As will be discussed in the next section, the name of the ancient town, Dali, is also under scrutiny.

At the same time, there are other Bai scholars who are concerned to develop the Bai language, or create a Bai written language, which may be far-reaching for Bai Identity in the long run. Although many historical details still remain uncertain, especially regarding the interpretations of historical relics, the significance of the study of Bai written tradition after the 1950s has been to distinguish the Bai from the Han and Yi rather than to examine the language per se. The research per se is not important compared with the position that the researchers choose in the research process. It is quite likely that the have-nots are not so vocal out of a concern for their positioning; they often convey this idea through a lament (e.g. Sun Taikang 1957). As will be discussed later, this reservation has motivated them to advocate the creation of a Bai written language.

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[83]Here Wu Jinding interprets the character "wan" as "made or done", but Wang points out that any Bai-speaking person would understand that "wan" means "tile" in Bai dialect. Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:134-137) also draws from the same archaeological data and takes it as a marker of the tile-makers.

All in all, the Bai written form has more symbolic significance than practical value. Whether the Bai have lost their written form is not the point of this thesis,[84] but the concern with a Bai identity that has stimulated these debates highlights the theme of this thesis: the debates and the vague sense of a loss of a Bai written form *express and create* a high level of awareness and intensity of Bai Identity. The more difficult it is to prove the existence of, or promote the writings of, Bai language, the stronger the intensity of self-awareness becomes. As Wang Jichao (2000) notes, some Bai intellectuals have been arguing strongly for the rehabilitation or creation of a Bai written form.

3.3.3 Promoting Bai Written Form

The creation of a Bai written language is very important both to the state and to the local people. In the 1950s, the newly-established government was keen to create equality among the 56 (including the Han) categories. Many *minzu* have their own spoken languages, but not as many have their own written language. Creating written languages for those *minzu* lacking a written form[85] was introduced into the agenda of

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[84] Cf Tan Chee-beng's case study among the Baba Chinese in Melaka (1988). The loss of Chinese language and the adaptation of Malay do not cause some of them to lose their Chinese identity in contrast to the non-Baba Chinese, Baba Malay and the Baba.

[85] Such as the Miao (Enwall 1995a&b), the Yao (Litzinger, 2000:xv-xvi,7), the Zhuang (Kaup 2000:138-146) and the Yi (Schoenhals 2001) to name only a few. See Zhou Minglang (2003) for more details about the creation and reform of writing systems for ethnic minorities. For discussion of ethnic groups who already have their own written language but can differ from place to place, such as the Yi people in Liangshan, Guizhou and Yunnan, see Schoenhals 2001. See Fu Maoji (1990) and Blum (1994:72) for a general introduction of the effort throughout China. Usage of minority languages has also been promoted (see Litzinger, 2000:7). State efforts in standardising Bai written form first stated in 1956; after a break of nearly four decades, the state launched a study over the usage of languages

socialist construction, and great efforts were made. To *minzu* populations, creating a written form of their own entails establishing identities and dignity.

The *minzu* language work team in Dali interviewed more than 500 people and held twenty-one meetings involving 423 people in the 1950s. Most interviewees strongly accepted the idea of creating a written language (Li Shaoni 1981), including grassroots cadres, farmers, secondary and primary school teachers, native artisans, cultural workers and local cadres at the prefecture level. However, Bai intellectuals, especially university students, teachers and some cadres were against the plan, which I assume was because they were sceptical about the possibility of creating an artificial language.[86] Li Shaoni (1981) argues for creating a Bai written form "in a Latin alphabetic form:"[87]

> We have to admit that Bai written form has not been accredited officially nor widely used as a communication tool, and there have been no formal [official] initiatives to create a Bai written language before. Lack of it is the vital cause of the parlous situation for the Bai written form.
>
> Once the Bai people have our own written language, in a couple of decades we will produce a lot of artistic workers, writers, scholars and professors. It is impossible or very tough to do that in Mandarin in the same period of time. …

In another paper, Li (1995) expresses his vision that "the excellent Bai culture can prosper only through the development of Bai language, and creating Bai

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created in the 1950s among ethnic minority people. A book-length report on *The Current Language Usage among Ethnic Minority People* in Yunnan was finished in 1997.

[86] They were also concerned that a Bai written language would render them illiterate.

[87] Which is in fact a pinyin-based Romanised script.

language is one way to gain equal status with the Han in economic development and education.

So the Bai category is taken seriously and has given rise to new research and practical initiatives by those designated as Bai.

3.4 Attitudes towards Han influences

The complex local history and close ties established with the Han have actually enabled the identification of the Bai as a separate and possibly superior *minzu* group. Han influence is a major feature in Bai Identity, which also serves to differentiate them from the Yi.

Since the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 A.D), especially during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), Bai people have had been exposed to Chinese education. Later, they participated in the imperial examinations and set up both private and public schools, which were Confucian schools. A Confucius hall or altar is still very popular in *benzhu* temples. So it is not difficult to see Han culture as inseparable from Bai culture. Most of the Bai elite and ordinary people acknowledge their links with the Han, but insist there is still something distinctive about the Bai, for example, the spoken language, *benzhu* cults, housing style, and food preferences. Different people list slightly different aspects. First, let us see how various researchers have dealt with Han influence in their studies, which may or may not represent "a latent attraction to Chinese culture" as Crossley criticises (2006b:20).

As mentioned above, both Fitzgerald (1941:22) and Goullart (1955:130) suggest that the city name "Ta Li" either derives from the Shan language, meaning "good ferry", or the Mon-Khmer word meaning "big lake". [88] Wang Shuwu (王树五 1986,1990), however, has listed a number of different Chinese synonymous characters. Wang maintains that the current name大理, meaning "great principle," comes from大礼 (great etiquette), not what Westerners "imagine"(also see Shi Lizhuo 1998:69). According to Wang, the first King during the Dali kingdom (938-1382), Duan Siping chose the two Chinese characters. Wang rejects the Tai-origin theory,[89] stating that the three different words for Dali are all Chinese words because the Nanzhao rulers "longed for the Tang Court and were keen on adopting the Confucian notion of *lizhi* (礼治to rule with *li*)"[90]

Wang notes that the Bai built Confucian temples in Dali, and the Nanzhao king Geluofeng read nothing but Confucian texts. He also made his offspring study Confucian ideology, and sent sons of the ruling class to learn from the Han in Chengdu. That is why the Bai could be more 'advanced' that any other groups in the region. Zhang Xu (1986[1982]) makes it clear the Bai have been much influenced by the Han even before the Yuan dynasty (1253-1368), but have not been assimilated. His point is: the Bai are ethnically distinctive.

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[88] Goullart also makes the same conclusion in asserting "Tali is not Chinese, but a perversion of the Khmer word Tongle, which means Lake" (1955:130).

[89] Other historians such as Fang Guoyü, Jiang Yinliang, Ma Changshou, Du Yüting and Chen Lüfan have condemned the Tai-establishment theory.

[90] Here Wang's argument has some point in that "li" is one of the main Confucian ideologies. As a philosophical concept on the internal order of political and moral domains, "li" is the basic quality in a decent man and is a basic foundation to rule a country.

More often than not, the Bai elite emphasise the Han influences to differentiate themselves from the Yi or Dai, and emphasise the aboriginal traits to differentiate themselves from the Han. Highlighting Han influence actually helps make the point that Bai culture is unique, better than other *minzu* in Yunnan, and that the Bai have been equal, or even superior to, the Han. For instance, Han influence has been pointed to as an indicator of higher education among the Bai. Many of the Bai elite have become well-known scholars and high profile officials. Ma Yao impressed his fellow countrymen by writing Chinese poems at the age of fourteen. Only after he had established himself as an historian in Chinese history did he start to take up ethno-history.

Music is another important aspect of the Han influence. Shi Lizhuo (2000b) argues that Dongjing music started in Dali earlier than in Lijiang among the Naxi, and was widespread in Dali (also see Liang Yongjia 2003:127). However, Dongjing music has been successfully registered in the minds of the Chinese public, and promoted, as a Naxi tradition (see Rees, 2000:186), and has become part of Naxi identity in Lijiang. So Dongjing music lost its significance to the Bai, and was totally discarded from the Bai package that usually contains *benzhu* belief and *gua sa na* (a social event that will be discussed in Chapter Six). No effort was expended explicating on it, and local leaders and researchers shifted their attention to another "ethnic option" (Mary Waters 1990): the most localised Bai tradition of *da ben qu* opera, a "public story-telling institution" in F. K. Hsu's term (1971[1948]:197-99) as will be noted in Chapter Six. Here, what *can be made different* is more significant than what *is* different.

3.5 The Politics of Bai Studies

In conclusion, members of the Bai elite have taken up Bai studies as a medium of civil action, in which individual motives become collective ones. Today, the local elite had started to feel and act together as a group with positive self-consciousness. They no longer hide their *minzu*, identity or reproduce mainstream discourses,[91] and demonstrate explicitly that they are neither simply agents of the state nor victims of a totalitarian government. Here there is no sharp opposition between a dominant state apparatus against an oppressed *minzu*, Other. Rather, this is a negotiation between an absolutist state and actively participating society. Society is part of the state, and the periphery can be part of a centre or simply one of many centres. Local history is represented through the elites' interpretations of an imagined past of Bai predecessors. In this sense, local history is "native history" (Dirlik 1997:59) vis-à-vis the Han and Yi historical accounts and narratives. Bai intellectuals have challenged the image of the state-categorised *minzu* as subalterns who cannot speak (Spivak 1988:308).

This chapter has explored the "textual habitus" (Messick 1997) of the Bai elite in order to see beyond the walls of our own. What are presented here are topics that involve most Bai researchers, which are not systematic in an academic sense, but systemic in the sense of motivation, determination and persistence in articulating a Bai Identity. Many of them lack adequate training and their theories and arguments

[91] Bai studies is a response to socio-political changes. Unlike subgroup Miao intellectuals who started to argue for political recognition in the1930s and 1940s (see Cheung 2003), none of the Bai local elites ever referred to themselves as being a member of the Bai or being ethnically distinctive before 1949, a state of affairs that continued until the 1980s for non-Dali-based intellectuals.

may lack solid evidence, yet this *is* precisely the point of their Bai studies: to establish boundaries and employ self-empowerment rather than academic pursuit.

Furthermore, conducting Bai studies has also become an intellectual path and a decent level of being Bai. Bai studies has become a process of self empowerment and a source of authority. Unlike traditional Chinese intellectuals who stood above the common public and spoke only in the name of transcendental truth (also see Litzinger 2000:18), local elite have acquired new roles in representing and empowering themselves as individuals and as a group for their career development. Building on the long-time legacy of the higher social status of the Bai,[92] they define and defend their "artificial boundaries" (R. Cohen 1978:380). Turning a critical gaze on their own past, they reveal the dynamics and complexity in the construction of Bai Identity through validating locally produced knowledge. Bai history is not only what they share, but also what they choose to fight over.

The question of who has the right to speak for the Bai has shifted into who has the right to represent the Bai. The Bai elite try to monopolize the meanings of being Bai in the discursive domain. The elite are attempting to gain a monopoly over knowledge production by producing "authoritative" insider definitions of the place and the people vis-à-vis external researchers. Researchers today always bracket their Bai Identity after their names in publications. When I was interviewing them, they often positioned themselves as authorities to interpret or represent the Bai. To a great

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[92] This is related directly to the dignity, self-consciousness and esteem of being Bai. Among the intellectuals, there is an idealized pervasive stereotype: the Bai culture is an advanced, civilised, rational and open structure. Some Bai have become national celebrities in various fields, a fact that is widely cited since most of the other ethnic groups have not produced such a number of prominent figures in local history.

extent, local elites have contributed to the shift of the Bai category from a mere state-granted *minzu* label into a factual ethnic group.[93]This situation forces us to re-think the history authorised by imperial writers and outside researchers, *as well as* all the conventional knowledge that has been produced and reproduced within Bai studies by the Bai.

Studies of origin and history have answered, to some extent, who the Bai were and where they came from, and inevitably, the interpretation of local history becomes subservient to present needs at times. Yet some study of Dongjing music entails their considerations of 'what we may become' and 'how we might represent ourselves.'

In Bai studies, what is Bai is not only juxtaposed vis-à-vis the Han, but also vis-à-vis the Yi at the local level, and the Tai at the international level of Thai studies conference, for example. To the Bai elite, there is nothing ambiguous in Bai Identity. The state's objects are not passive; members of local elite "subject themselves" (Anderson 1998:319) in Bai studies. Bai studies is "direct manipulation of knowledge" (Ahern 1981:5) and one of the many bases on which they can act in terms of group membership. Bai elite have shown that boundary is "that from which something begins its presencing" (Martin Heidegger from Bhabha 1994:1). Bai studies has elicited and made visible the processes of identity construction and representation with which this thesis is concerned.

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[93] See Harrell (1996b, 2001b) for the case of the Yi and Pumi. Here I am using an ethnic category and ethnic group in Kunstadter's term. "By ethnic group he means a set of individuals with mutual interests based on shared understandings and common values… Ethnic categories are classes of people based on real or presumed cultural features. It involves more or less standardisation of behaviour toward the category by others in the society" (R. Cohen 1978:386).

Chapter Four

Partial Identity and the Different Degrees of Bai-ness

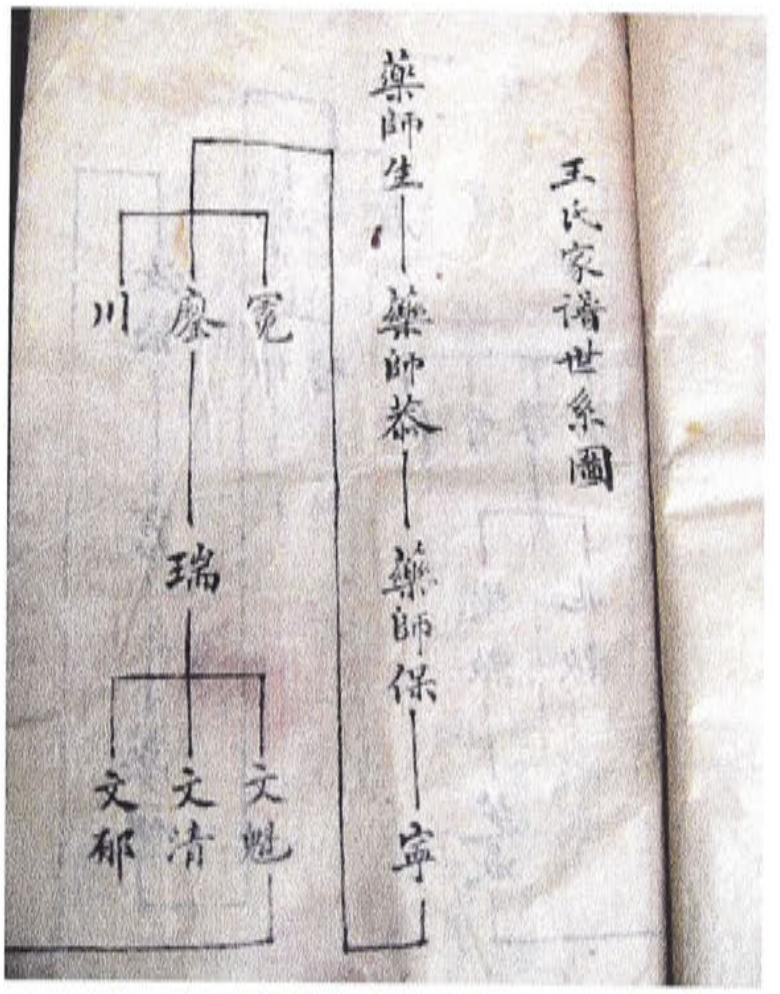
Ill. 13: Renovated fancy gate and wood panel. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 14: Z family's gate. Colour Village. 2004.

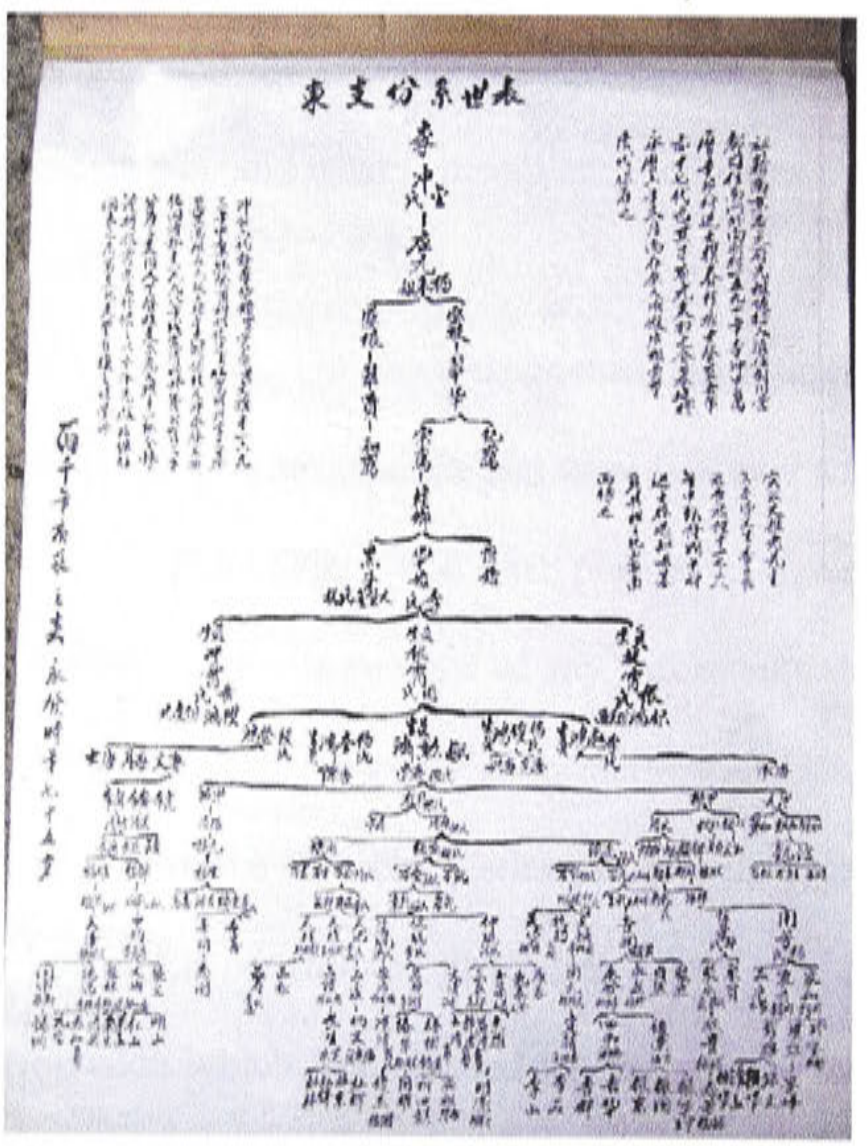
Ill. 15: The 'authentic' Bai dancing at a temple event. (photo courtesy of Dong Rongqiang. 2003).

Ill. 16: Mr. Sui and brother explaining their Han ancestor tablets. CampVillage. 2004.

Ill. 16a: Genealogy of Wang Song's (1752-1837) descendent. 2005.



Ill. 16b: Genealogy of the Zhangs. 2005.



Chapter Four

Partial Identity and the Different Degrees of Bai-ness

Previous chapters have analysed the creation of *minzu* categories by the state (Chapters One and Two) and the making of Bai Identity by local elite (Chapter Three). This chapter focuses on the local people's memories of their recent past and their internal classifications, which portray a different picture of Bai Identity to the one that the state and the elites have promoted. The narrations of ordinary local people weave rich and complex threads into the Bai tapestry, adding complexity to the Han-Bai division and shaping various degrees of Bai-ness.

This chapter also reveals the social roots engendering the theories of Bai origin, and the striking contrast between ordinary villagers' narrations about their recent past and what is meant and studied as Bai history by the elite. Unlike the latter, ordinary people do not always see their past as a resource to invent Bai ethnicity intellectually, but their segmented narrations of the past, to a large extent, are selected to recall who the Bai were in a way which is meaningful to them.

The chapter will first present a higher pan-Bai identity because this often appears in the narrations of my informants. Han origin and Han-Bai divisions are both important concepts in formations of Bai identity. Then I will discuss how the Bai make the Han-Bai distinction and their internal classifications. I argue that Bai Identity is constructed in relation to the Han and other *minzu*. But it is the Han-Bai division which has affected the degrees of Bai-ness. The need to differentiate Han

and Bai is based on a concern for prestige and gaining resources. I coin the term "partial identification" to characterise Bai identities, which maintain flexibility through a shifting balance between the spectrum of Han and Bai difference.

The Bai category is by no means uniform; it is a fluid, complex one in which these people are happy to include in-comers and the latter are happy to be included because of the Bai's high social status.

4.1 A Higher Pan-Bai Identity in recent memories

As shown in Chapter Three, local history has been constructed into a mutually shared Bai history by the elite. Yet ordinary people have different judgements about which part of this history is important. They are more interested in the recent history that is related to their personal experience than the Nanzhao (752-902 AD) or Dali (938-1382) periods, although they are also proud of a glorious local history. It is very easy for the Bai to feel pride in being Bai for they "can feel superior to the Han on the Han's own terms" (Unger 1997:72) and even the Han show their respect when referring to the Bai. People kept blaming the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), in which cultural sites had been destroyed, for the loss of their memories.[1] This complaint of loss was accompanied by a conviction that whatever the Bai had in the past was evidence of superiority. I argue that their narrations, inconsistent as they can be, illustrate different aspects and degrees of identification within the Bai category.

[1]This may also includes earlier political movements in the 1940s and 1950s.

4.1.1 Tangible objects remembered as belonging to the Bai

When I was in Light Village, I often went to the village centre, an open space where the village market and the Senior Villagers' Association are located. Some old men usually spend the whole day there smoking and enjoying the sunshine; I therefore made use of bright and sunny afternoons for focus group interviews. Village elders, like the educated members of the Bai elite I interviewed, love to talk about local history, but in different ways. They feel very proud of the bits and pieces of their own personal/family history they preserve (see Ill. 12), such as genealogies (see Appendix 2 & p.158), tombstones, old Bai-style houses, wooden panels (see Ills. 13 & 14) that survived the Cultural Revolution. They love to tell their family stories and to be acknowledged.[2] Their memories sometimes sounded messy, illogical and irrelevant to the question of Bai Identity, yet their apparent motivation in choosing particular memories was to select anything related to the Bai that could be drawn from their memory.

The most obvious strategy had to do with genealogies. People use written genealogies not merely for recording lineage history (Faure 1989) or land rights (Faure 1999), but to objectify ethnicity and identity in Dali. Regardless of their accuracy and constructed nature, family genealogies provide a site where Han and Bai identities can shift very easily, which is acceptable customarily and practically. Genealogical records were produced in order to demonstrate a suitable Han ancestor

[2] It must be pointed out that when major national events trickled down from the top and spread all over the country, their traces were left everywhere and virtually no one could escape. This was especially true during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) when the Bai did not experience anything different from what other peoples experienced in other parts of China (see Unger 1985; Fei 1989:43-47; Gao 1999, Liu 2000, Mueggler 2001).

by elites in the 1940s.[3] Yet the situation has changed. According to Liang Yongjia (2003:68), one of the most prominent three lineages in West Town started to claim that their ancestors were actually locals. Liang's interview with West Town dwellers show that half of the population identified with the Bai in 2002. Many of my informants in other Bai communities were quite scornful about fellow villagers whose genealogies indicated a Nanjing or Hunan origin. They criticised these people for merely "echoing each other." It is not difficult to see that people are now re-writing their own family histories and claiming a Bai origin to justify a new vision of Bai Identity.

To make it more complicated, relying on participatory observations and unstructured interviews was inadequate to determine whether someone was identifying with the Bai category. If I ignored their accents, I sometimes totally forgot that I was doing fieldwork among a group of people identified as the Bai. It also seemed to me that sometimes my informants totally forgot about their Bai label. Checking this out with my informants on different occasions, I found that Bai Identity was still felt and expressed in their own ways although these could be totally blind spots even to participatory observers.

When asked about important events of the Bai village in the past, most of these old men would simply generalise that their memories had disappeared with the "Eradicating Four Old Things" campaign in the 1950s[4]. One said: "Our memory has

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[3] Such claims are quite common among other *minzu* and *non-minzu* groups, such as one of the Yi lineages (Harrell 2001b:5), the Yao (Litzinger 2000), Pearl River Delta Cantonese (Faure 1989). For claims from the central plains by the Yao, She and Zhuang in northern Guangdong, see Siu and Faure (1995a).

[4] See Mueggler (2001: 258,260-63, 275) for experiences in the same movement in nearby Yi

gone with the burning and destroying of all old things" (see Ill. 58 for a remnant) Others showed their agreement either by echoing his words or nodding. At that time, the village had held general meetings; individuals were told to turn in their old possessions, which meant anything passed on as family heritage. To some families, this included all the classical books on Chinese history and literature, and hand-copied family genealogies, which became fuel in the fires that were set up in the village's open spaces. It seemed to me that these recollections about their recent history were particular and meaningful to a narrator as an individual, and as a Chinese, rather than as an example of an ethnic group experience.[5]

However, having conducted interviews in a number of villages, I realised that they all liked to talk about three items: wood panels over some of the prominent Bai family gates, classical books in Chinese history and literature, and buildings such as local temples and old mansions. When they said they had lost their memories, they were actually referring to the loss of these items in the local social landscape that could demonstrate who they were. To my informants, the social memories embodied in tangible objects were self-evident and objective, thus reliable. They assumed all these items belonged to the Bai rather than any other people in the same area, which is generally true. They frequently used such tangible objects as a "mnemonic" (Bloch 1996) of Bai ethnicity, by which they meant everything associated with the legal status of the Bai and what it was to be Bai after the NECP. While it seemed to me at first that they forgot about being Bai when they were talking about those few 'lost'

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communities.

[5] Although this may not have been the case with other ethnic minorities in Yunnan such as the Naxi, Lahu and Dai, whose cultural encounters and confrontations with the ultra-leftist ideology were severe.

objects, they were actually selecting these very items from their memory to demonstrate precisely what they perceived to be Bai.

The most popular objects are the wood panels over the door arches that were used to record family or personal glory, granted by imperial courts or other higher government organisations (see Ill. 13&14).[6] These wood panels are inscribed with beautiful calligraphy and may seem to be full of state domination from a Western perspective, but they were a source of group pride for my informants, because non-Bai villages in the same area, even local Han villages, rarely possessed any.[7] As senior informants recalled in the past, some Bai families with economic resources would find some reason to hang a new panel over their gates, which often caused gossip and social offence. Making such a glittering face was not merely an economic issue.[8] A wood panel over the doorway was a sign of higher social status.

What is important here is the fact that wood panels are no longer simply a source of pride for individual families and their descendents, but are now a symbol of a superior Bai Identity (see Ill. 13 & 14). To outsiders, these wood panels and their

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[6] Some villagers take such wood panels for granted as something ordinary, leaving them on the door arch without any special care. Some are more cautious, keeping them inside the houses as a precaution against "theft" or "another political movement."

[7] Different villages possess different numbers of such panels. I have been to Bai villages that have none, and there are few, if any, in other neighbouring non-Bai villages.

[8] One of three criteria is essential: whether someone from this family had obtained an equivalent administrative position from the imperial court which was considered worthy of the panel; secondly, whether he had passed the imperial examination; thirdly, whether he had been granted one panel for special achievement by officials at the provincial level or above. The first two criteria also applied to building houses. The ruins of a brilliant three-layered (*san di sui*) lane gate of the Yang lineage still stands in the village as a testimony and reminder of earlier radical political movements in local history (see Ill. 58).

stories may merely reveal a part of family history rather than the history of the Bai. Yet the people themselves do not think about them this way. One informant insisted:

> Wood panels can be found *only* in Bai villages. They are very rare in Han villages and none are found among the Yi or Naxi except for the Mu [Naxi] family in the town centre.

The fact that wood panels are particularly found in Bai villages led to the assertion that only Bai people possessed these wood panels, and had attained certain achievements which they signified.

Another item that frequently come up in conversations about recent Bai history was old books. Mr. Sui (64 years old) was a middle-school teacher in another town in the 1960s. During the "Eradicating Four Old Things" period, he travelled for three days all the way back to his village to save his books, to find only a copy of their genealogy and a few copies of local ethnographies left intact.

> She [pointing to his wife] is illiterate, she knew nothing, everyone was asked to hand in such stuff, and she did as was instructed. I knew this would happen to my old books, I just came back too late.

Another account of the importance of such classical books was given by Madam Zhou, whose childhood was filled with the classical Chinese stories that have been repeated all over China for centuries.[9]

> My father was a village primary school principal, he loved to tell stories, he told us stories from *Sanguo Yanyi* (The Three Kingdoms) and *Xi You Ji*

[9]Johnson (1985) argues that the public reading sessions helped incorporate imperial ideas into Chinese societies in late imperial China, thus Confucian ideology spread from the top down to the commoners. Madame Zhou's account may well refer to one of the public story telling sessions very popular before the 1950s.

> (Monkey King) all night long. We loved these stories. We had to hand in two big baskets of these books, it was a great pity. …

Besides classical books and wood panels, Bai people also liked to talk about temples. They described how KMT soldiers came in the 1940s, burnt down temples and took away gold Buddha images to sell them.[10] Temples were turned into village primary schools in the 1950s.[11] Beautifully carved doors and window frames with historical and legendary images were either burned or used as stools and desks. Villagers showed me the remaining doors and windows, damaged by innocent pupils or deliberately destroyed by ultra-leftist young advocates during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76).[12]

The remains of mansions were also taken as bearing witness to the glorious past of the Bai. One of my informants was 69 and almost totally blind because of an eye disease. When I first met her, she offered to show me around the remaining "gorgeous mansions that can only be found in Bai villages." She spent two days showing me around her village and a neighbouring village. Before I left, she said she

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[10] For the strong anti-superstition campaign since the Republic Period, see Feuchtwang (1989), F. K. Hsu (1952).

[11] Prior to1949, most village schools were private and basically for rich families, so they were not big enough for the whole village after the promotion of public education which followed the Liberation in 1949.

[12] Historical tombs were also destroyed. Stones have never been rare resources in this mountainous area, yet tombstones from the Tang (618-907 AD) dynasty were used as corner-stones to build houses and bridges, and even smashed into pebbles for road construction. Some of the relic tombstone tablets in the prefecture museum still bear cement remains from such usages. This includes the much renowned Nanzhao Stele, a stone inscribed with 3,800 Chinese characters which vividly describes the early history of Nanzhao Kingdom, its relationship with the Tang Court and the whys and wherefores of the Tianbao warfare (751-759 AD) between the court and Nanzhao Kingdom.

felt extremely sorry that I was not going to see many more such building remains simply because:

> One cannot see them anywhere. Not everyone can make their house like that, not even if you have got a lot of money. Splendour village, one of the neighbouring villages, was like a capital then; we used to go there just to admire the magnificent houses when I was young. Those houses were gorgeous then, although they do not look so big judging by present standards.

As a matter of fact, the physical eradication of cultural artefacts did not lead to a total vacuum of memories. These selected items are associated with the predecessors of the Bai, thus enabling the Bai to stand on a higher ground than other peoples in the same area. In addition, this sense of a higher Bai identity was displayed in other ways.

The 'lost' memories are a result of what they choose to remember about who they are. The memory of the past is not really lost, as my informants claimed. It has been renewed and transformed in response to the circumstances of post-Mao socio-economic life. In fact, lost memories have become alive again in the rehabilitation of some tangible traditions in the local social and geographical landscape: the re-recording and rewriting of some family genealogies, rebuilding of local deity temples and fancy Bai-style house gates (see Ill.s 13 & 14),[13] objects they assume to have belonged to their Bai forefathers and what they view as a highly civilised, educated

[13] And of course, the discourse of rehabilitation of Dali Bai tradition is also a catch phrase of local government from the village to prefecture levels, and a prevailing drive all over China. Yet my point is: the emphasis on lost memories may be a product of selective forgetting or structural amnesia (Herzfeld 2001), which opens a space for claims and for meaning-imputing by different actors.

and prosperous people in Dali.[14] It seems to me that sense of a lost past is nostalgia for their lost 'true' ethnicity. A strong lament for the loss of educational level among the younger generation is, I would interpret, a lament for the loss of Bai superiority.

Apart from tangible objects, the loss of even the intangible meanings of local events such as the *gua sa na* (see Chapter Six) was also regretted even in the 1930s (see Fitzgerald 1941: 121).

To select and preserve such memories is actually one of their own ways of shaping Bai-ness and being Bai. In this light, senses of loss are actually active processes of recall and are related to constructing Bai Identity.[15] They make these certain memories *theirs* and they become part of *them.*[16]

4.1.2 Memories of living standards and education level of the Bai

A sense of superiority was also reflected in regard to the living standards and educational levels of the Bai, which were considered higher than those of the Han and Yi even prior to 1949. Finding I was also planning to visit some nearby Yi villages, one villager kindly reminded me:

> You've got to prepare some canned food as life is not easy there. It is much better now compared with the past when they had nothing to eat except for bitter buckwheat pancakes. And you won't see any decent houses there as you see in Bai villages; they just don't have any, and never did at all.

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[14]This is true if we take into consideration that even in the 1940s, for example, two telephones were already installed in two wealthy households.

[15] Loss of memories is also presented through a widespread belief in the "old Bai written form" as discussed in Chapter Three, and that anything 'lost' is believed to have jeopardized Bai identity.

[16] See Chapters Five and Six for the penetration of imperial and Confucian ideologies into religious practices.

When eating at the table before I left for a Yi village in the same county, my host made the following comment as he added more food to my bowl:

> Eat more; you will not be able to have all these gorgeous foods out there. This *senpi* (specially preserved raw-pork) is part of our Bai food culture. In ancient times, our ancestors developed this unique way of preserving pork. The Yi have nothing like this, they had nothing to eat except maize and potato, that is why they have not developed much of a food culture of their own.[17]

Education is another important index to measure the assumed higher level of the Bai. After retiring from a public service position, Mr. Wa researched and found that the educational level of the Bai (judged by the number of university and high school graduates) had been "dropping" in recent years.[18]

> We were doing better than the Han in the villages and generally in the province [prior to 1949]. Unfortunately, the picture is different now and they [referring to the local educational institute] have not realised this situation [of a declining education level among the Bai] at all. In the past, the wealthy families were the Bai [note there was no group labelled as Bai then], and the Bai received a better education. Now the young Bai do not know this, they only follow the Westernisation trends.

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[17] I actually had the most delicious goat stew and a few other locally preserved foods in Yi communities.

[18] The stereotypical view of the Bai being better educated is also revealed in a survey conducted among urban university students. The students estimated that the mean level of education among the Bai is 6.76 years while that among the Dai is 3-5 years (Blum 1994:238). See Liang Yongjia (2003:64) for a list of some Chinese archives that record the higher social status of predecessor's of the Bai in Dali. See F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:206-215) for general educational objectives among villagers in the 1940s.

My informants had good reasons to feel proud of the higher level of education among the Bai, but there was no need for Mr. Wa to worry about this decline because statistics show that the Bai are excellent in eradicating illiteracy.

Table 6: Declining illiteracy rate among the Bai, Yi, Han and the national level

	1982	**1990**	**2000**	**1982 ~ 2000**
Bai	41.62	30.15	12.3	29.6
Yi	63.19	49.71	26.0	41.1
Han	31.03	21.53	9.0	29.0
National	31.88	22.21	9.5	29.8

Sources: abstracted from Ma Rong (2003b:.177)

Mr. Wa was not happy about the promoted Bai-style men's jerkin (waist-coat), which he thought degraded the Bai:

> It is a shame that kind of thing is advocated as Bai. That is just a jerkin of the Yi horsemen [who used to be transportation coolies]. Dying it indigo cannot make it Bai. What a self-degradation!

In daily conversation, pan-Bai identity is always held high in relation to the identity of the Yi or other peoples in the same region. The locals come up with different ways to evidence their sense of superiority. Mr Wong took me to the Gao lineage shrine and told me stories about the imperial connection of the Gaos. The village deity was from the Gao family and was said to be the uncle of the then Emperor. And this village deity is a higher deity in the village cosmologic hierarchy. The story of the Gao lineage's close ties with the central court also was often mentioned by many informants in other nearby villages.

The story of the Gao lineage shares common themes with Yao and Han legends in southeast China which claim affiliation with imperial courts or senior officialdom. According to David Faure (1989, 1999), such claims were originally often made to establish land rights in the history of southern China.[19] Yet now in Dali, the situation is different. The Gao story is no longer told to access land rights or to show their family's intimate relationship with the Han, but to illustrate the overall uplifting of the Bai in comparison with other ethnic minorities and the Han peoples in Yunnan. This seems to indicate that memories considered worth remembering and worth talking about are not always traumatic and do not necessarily indicate an identity crisis as Antze and Lambek (1996: preface) maintain.

In most cases, Bai Identity is contrasted to that of the Han, with whom the Bai have had the most and longest contact. Yet claiming a Han origin has also been common among people in Dali. How then, is the Han-Bai distinction made?

4.2 Between Han and Bai, a double identification?

In a Bai village along the west bank of Erhai lake, people I talked to always identified with the Bai category, with 100% certainty. However, after becoming familiar with me over a period of time, varying from 2-3 hours to several days, some would tell me that they were actually descendants from Han troops, mostly from Hunan or Nanjing at different times in history.[20] To put this another way, my

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[19] David Faure also notes that claims of descent from local men who had married Song-dynasty princesses are not at all uncommon in the Pearl River Delta (Faure 1999: 270).

[20] Many ordinary informants are quite scornful as I noted previously in this chapter about some fellow

informants declare that they are Bai, but state at the same time that they are not 'authentic' Bai because they are Han descendents. Similar to what the elite discussed (Chapter Three), they argue for a native theory but with Han-origin or hybrid orientations.

The ethno-historians' assumption of indigenisation (*yihua*), examined in Chapters One and Three, is widely acknowledged by many villagers, who take it for granted that there was a transformation from the Han to the Bai in early local history.[21] The following notion from one informant was repeated by several others along the west bank of Erhai lake:

> Our seniors told us that our ancestors were immigrants who became assimilated [i.e. indigenised] after arrival [in Dali]; they married local [non-Han] women after settling down in Dali. You've got to survive, haven't you? especially when you are displaced.

The model in their narrative is: Han immigrants married local women and became members of the current Bai. My informants always relied on genealogies to demonstrate the validity of the model. But this model is actually difficult to support historically given the fact that different peoples, such as the aboriginal Yi and Han villagers in Yunnan, share the same oral tradition, and basically none of the

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villagers whose genealogies indicate a Nanjing/Hunan origin. They criticised these people for merely "echoing/following each other. Such claims are quite common among other ethnic and social groups such as Mao, one of the Yi lineages (Harrell 2001b:5); Yao (Litzinger 2000), Pearl River Delta Cantonese (Faure 1989), Yao, She and Zhuang (Siu and Faure1995a).

[21] It is also assumed that differentiation occurred after these migrants adapted to the new varied socio-cultural environment. Yet no contextual descriptions or supporting details regarding the circumstances of their sojourn are provided in ethno-historians' works.

genealogies recorded women in the first few generations.[22] People seemed to continually attach themselves to Han ancestry while remaining in the Bai category. As Duan Weiji (2004) has recently concluded, the Bai identity appears to involve a double identification with both the Han and the Bai, and people always shift between these two categories as circumstances dictate.

Exploring this furthe, my informants would point out that many Bai are actually not 'real' Bai, but are actually Han who became Bai to take advantage of affirmative action. Yet such cynicism does not offer any clue as to why these alleged opportunists took Bai rather than other *minzu* categories to reach their instrumental goals. The higher social status the Bai have enjoyed may account for some cases. When asked if Bai identity was still a stigma which might have a negative impact or unfavourable consequences for those who are identified as such, my informants told me that that was the case before liberation [1949], but not now.

The blurring of the Han-Bai boundary itself *is* one of their expressions of Bai Identity. While a Han origin is a primary part of their memory, the Yi were simply mentioned in passing as part of the context of identification. Next, I will explore how the division between Han and Bai could, at first glance, seem to be merely an issue of timing.

4.2.1 The time dimension in Han and Bai identification

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[22]If she was documented at all, the first generation matriarch was usually recorded as aboriginal (*yi ren*) meaning "local natives", rather than any specific ethnicity such as Yi, Bai or Naxi. This is not really a matter of ethnicity but that of gender. Genealogy, as a Confucian practice, is patriarchal and gender-biased.

In the minds of villagers, the Bai were different from the Han. If people could not tell the difference, they would fall back on the fact that the *Baizu* as a group did not come into being until after the Liberation in 1949. The NECP, or after Liberation, in my informants' own words, marked the start of the *minzu* categories. My informants often pointed out that their simultaneous identification with the Bai category and a Han origin resulted from the fact that the term *Baizu* as a collective *minzu* label was not validated constitutionally until the late 1950s when many local dwellers suddenly became Bai after Liberation [1949] because there was no formal *Baizu* category before the 1950s (NECP), as discussed in Chapters One and Two.

The division before and after the NECP can be very clear and directly spelled out by those who call themselves *minjia*,[23] the most frequently declared self-denomination among the Bai population in Dali. A senior villager still insisted to me that "we had been *minjia* before liberation [1949] and we were still *minjia* even after the Liberation [1949]; we became *Baizu* in the late 1950s." And this was a common view. Those who claimed to originate from Nanjing or Hunan ancestry often expressed a matter-of-fact attitude with remarks such as: "But we are all Bai now" as one informant told me.

In other instances, narrations may not clearly indicate any ethnicity, but my informants could articulate ethnic identity clearly with reference to the before/after-the-NECP division. For instance, one hot summer day after dinner, my hostess took

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[23] Surprisingly, villagers have no disagreement about the meaning of *minjia* and have been using this term to refer to the Han descendents in Dali whose ancestors were the dependents of servicemen or non-military personnel in general since the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty, regardless of what historians say. To some of those whose self-appellation is *minjia*, the term *Baizu* today connotates no ethnic reference but an administrative index.

me to visit her brother who lived a few blocks away in the same village. This brother was the oldest son in her natal family. My hostess was going to get their household registration booklet so that she could collect reimbursement from an environment project[24] on his behalf.

My hostess' brother and his wife were planning to go away; they had been expected for about 10 months by their two sons, who were doing business in other towns and struggling with young children without any support from a kinship network. They told me they would leave after the mid-Autumn festival. Since this festival was still two-and-a-half months away, I did not understand why they were postponing their trip since their sons were desperately in need of their help. This brother of my hostess told me they could not go because their mother had passed away the previous year, and they had to stay home to "*shouxiao.*" *Shouxiao* involves *shaobao*, which refers to the burning of incense and paper-money for the deceased (see Ill.68) and to perform post-mortuary services for their deceased mother after she "was gone". The coming mid-Autumn festival was the last obligation to *shaobao* in front of the tomb of their deceased mother.[25] By then, they would have stayed at home for 14 months and performed all the required sacrifices. My hostess' sister-in-law told me without any complaint:

> After that, we can leave to help our sons. I am going to Dragon County to baby-sit for my second son, and he [indicating her husband] is leaving for

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[24] The environment project has been launched by the government to compensate for farming land devastated in the 1950s and 1960s and as a means to rehabilitate the ecological environment.

[25]This does not mean that they have no future obligations, but they are just not so intense after the first 18 months. See also F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:188) for an ethnographic account of *shaobao*.

> Palm County to help our first son. Our two daughters also have young children, but that is their mother-in-law's business.

On our way home that night, I was still thinking of the couple's delay to help out their sons; parental assistance to adult children with their youngsters is always expected and is still strongly valued. I asked my hostess, "since you are the eldest daughter in the family, and I have seen that you help each other a lot in daily household chores, rituals, farm work and public affairs, can't you *shaobao* for your mother so that they can leave earlier? They can always get all the *bao* prepared and leave it for you, can't they?" "Absolutely not! I just cannot, and they won't [let me do it] either." she answered firmly. "Would not your mother accept the *bao* from you?" I asked. But she replied:

> No, it's not that. If I *shaobao*, that is different. That is their responsibility. They know that. This [practice] has been passed on for generations, they are supposed to do follow-up rituals; people from the same the lineage would not allow them [not to do so]. People would point their fingers at them, and the neighbourhood won't allow them to leave earlier. This is just the way we, the Bai, are accustomed to doing it; no one has ever changed it.

It was difficult for me to understand this 'we' as expressing an ethnic identity. The notion of ancestor-worship exists widely among different peoples in China.[26] Such practices were viewed as an indicator to measure whether indigenous people

[26]The belief in the continuing significance of the dead is still ubiquitous (also see Keyes et al.1994). Rural-urban identity distinctions in China are obvious in society, yet the rural-urban identities are a result of social political changes (see Faure and Liu 2002) related to socio-economic conditions rather than an ethnic distinction. For ethnography of rural-urban relations in the republic era see Fei (1953); for difference exhibited in the ability of speaking an indigenous language, see Blum (1994:290).

were civilised or not by the imperial courts and traditional literati, and have been emphasised as a pan-Chinese or Confucian ideology in English scholarship.[27] Most of my informants and the Han traditionally believe that how they treat the deceased affects the well-being of the living in the present.

What is important here is the fact that my hostess took this as a specifically Bai tradition. She had good reasons to assume so since people who became part of the Bai practiced this in the same way, that is to say, the *min-chia* (Fitzgerald 1941) in ancient towns in the 1930s and the residents of West Town (F. K. Hsu 1948) in the 1940s. When I mentioned cautiously that I had noticed that the Yi people also practiced the same rites, my hostess replied "Oh, yes, I am sure they do, but *now* we are Bai, right?"

The official Bai category is a handy label she used here to express community moral values and social behaviour. She called upon a specific Bai Identity rather than a general cultural tradition to explain the post-mortuary practices.

As another example, a male informant aged 64 told me about local conflicts prior to 1949 and showed me bullet holes remaining in a wall. I asked if he had any idea about the raiders' ethnic background. Mr. W replied immediately: "They might have been Han, or most probably Yi." When the same question was later raised in a group interview, one of the senior men provided a quick answer and won agreement from other villagers when he said, "there was no such thing as Bai, Han, or Yi at that time, was there?"

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[27]See C.K. Yang 1961, Jordan 1972, Feuchtwang 1974, 1977; A. Wolf 1974a, 1974c; Freedman 1974, Deglopper 1974, Harrell 1974, Ahern 1981, Watson 1985 and Weller 1987.

And there was no particular consciousness of being Bai when they talked about their fellow Bai villagers prior to the "Liberation" [1949]. One of my hosts told me the story of his neighbour.

> This Zhang family were the most prominent family in this area [referring to the current five villages]. The old patriarch, the general who earned a second-rank official position, was in his official post in Zhongdian [a county seat in the northwest that would remind one of the multi-*minzu* groups living there such as the Naxi, Tibetans, Lisu, Yi, etc.] In the past, their front courtyard was an execution place; the first room inside the outer courtyard was a prison room. They could execute anyone at will. There were two courtyards in their house. The first was built by the first successful son who obtained an official government position; the second was built by the second officer from that household.

This statement is presented here as an example of the common inconsistency of narrations. Such inconsistency often exists, as Gellner (1973:21) points out, not in isolation, but as part of the life and landscape of the community.

I was given the impression that consciousness of being Bai and ethnicity as a whole were direct results of the NECP in the 1950s. Therefore, I assumed that the idea of being Bai should be absent before the NECP. My informants, however, convinced me that I was totally wrong. A group of old villagers insisted that there was an "unofficial" Han-Bai division before Liberation [1949], and that the Bai were generally higher in social status. This was illustrated by the name of Wenshi village, a Han village nearby. One old man told me:

> Wenshi village was mainly inhabited by Han immigrants prior to 1949. They spoke Han, not Bai, there. It is still a Han village now. Most senior locals do not call it Wenshi village but *Bai-tu-ying* because they do not know the new

name of the village. They only know it by its old name. There was also an old saying which goes like this:

bai tu ying cang gu xi (Bai *tu* ying sing *tu* operas)
tu luo tu gu tu zheng qi (with *tu* gong and *tu* drums, and trying to make *tu* dignity)

The word "*tu*" reflects inferiority and disgrace, which was, in this particular village, related to the Han rather than to the aboriginal Bai as in Yokoyama's (1992) case. Wenshi villagers changed the old village name (*bai tu ying*) to get rid of the word "*tu*" and terminate the old pejorative saying. Yet the point here is, these senior informants were explaining the pre-1950s social relations in current *minzu* discourse. Obviously, ethnicity is not something completely new, but has always been well understood in changing ways.

I thus often got confused about the significance of the NECP, or Liberation, as a deciding factor in delineating *minzu* categories due to narrations that were not different from memories in non-Bai communities that I had learned from ethnographies and my own fieldwork experiences. As will be discussed in the next section, Fitzgerald's account of a clear division of rural urban division between non-Bai and *minjia* (part of the current pan-Bai) is still true in the minds of locals today.

4.2.2 Han and Bai, an urban-rural division?

The Han and Bai division was expressed as an urban-rural opposition by some locals. The following description of a funeral I attended in 2004 illustrates this point.

Lady Y (79) had passed away. Her natal place was one of the houses on the main street in the ancient town of Dali. This house had been leased to a young Zhejiang business couple who sold jade and jewellery to tourists. The old lady passed away after the Spring Festival, a peak tourist season. On the last day of the funeral, *chusang*, the shop was closed down and emptied. A fully made-up bed on which the old lady had lain during her last minutes was placed in the middle of the room. In front of the bed, facing the main street, there was an altar table with some small sacrificial plates and the box containing the old lady's ashes. On both sides of the altar some dry straw was prepared, on which the sons and daughters-in-laws could *kowtow* to mourners who came to pay tribute to the deceased. The old lady's ash-box and everything she had ever used were taken away after lunch and burnt at the tomb site. The shop remained closed that afternoon; the next day, it opened as if nothing had ever happened.

On the one hand, the shop-owner told me that he had to comply with the family's request because this is "*their Bai* custom. She [the deceased] must be taken away from where she had lived." The sons of the deceased compensated him "a little bit" in rent. On the other hand, he said he was "not mean because he could understand these things were beyond people's control," and because the same practice was followed in his own hometown in a Han town in eastern China. The shop owner explained that "people would react the same way and do the same thing when one of their family members passed away. It is the same everywhere, whether one is Han or Bai.[28]

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[28] After participating in and observing three funerals and double checking with informants in different

However, the family of the deceased and the community took it for granted that they were acting, and were supposed to act, according to local Bai custom. They assumed that the Han conducted their funerals differently by holding a *zuidaohui* (a condolence meeting in memory of the deceased). One member of the family explicitly stated that:

> The condolence meeting held in the workplace in the morning was the official funeral; this part is our Bai funeral. If you go to the rural villages, you will find that our funeral is the same as theirs.

This shows how they use rural practices to validate their sense of what a Bai funeral should be like. The sense of Bai-ness is located in the rural. The idea that the Bai are rural in contrast to the Han was reiterated by an elderly-looking lady who passed by and exclaimed: "How come this lady from the department store is gone already?" I asked if she knew the deceased. She answered: "No, not in person. I only know that she worked in the department store." When I asked if the deceased woman was Bai, she told me with certainty: "No, she is Han, the Bai are in the villages. We who live in the town are mainly Han people." She made the division between Han and Bai into an urban/rural dichotomy without hesitation, which contradicted the fact that the family of the deceased were Bai in formal registration as well as subjective identification.

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villages, I believe what most of my informants assured me; that funerals are basically organised the same as they had been before 1949. Some different practices in the details exist, but that has not affected their identification, and people insisted that the "main content" was still the same in terms of sutra-chanting, feasting and paper-money burning. Different practices are also a result of what social and economic resources are available to the living relatives.

The urban-rural, Han-Bai binary was illustrated not only in the perceptions of local Han towards the Bai, but also in the self-perceptions of the Bai. My interviews with other local people in the ancient town of Dali provided me with more evidence regarding this rural (Bai) vs. urban (Han) division. When the interviewee was 60 or older, the same binary was always asserted. Although their association with the rural may seem to lend them some inferiority today, the Bai nonetheless have always enjoyed a higher social status in Dali prefecture, as discussed previously in this chapter.

When I raised the question of the difference between Han and Bai, my informants would first emphasise the NECP, and then dwell on the 'authentic' Bai, assuring me that there are some people who possess more Bai-ness and who are associated with a rural area.

4.3 Internal differences

Later, I found greater complexity in the 'rural' concept of Bai identity. Villagers do not have a very clear idea of their actual origins, and only a handful know the origin myths in each village. Ordinary Bai people do not assume legends and genealogies are incontestable evidence although they are often used by ordinary people to identify themselves. They self-identify with the Bai while knowing very well the differences among themselves. These differences do not necessarily hold them back from identifying with each other as Bai. Instead, such differences have been teased out to differentiate the 'authentic' Bai (see Ill. 15) from the 'less'

authentic Bai. Internal differentiation is widely accepted. The emphasis on the 'authentic' Bai always emerges when it is difficult to distinguish the Bai from the Han.

As an anthropologist, this internal differentiation attracted me in its own right as a phenomenon and in terms of intra-social relations. I was also driven by the desire to study the 'authentic' Bai to legitimate my research. Nonetheless, my intention was not to judge who possessed more or less Bai-ness, but to show how narrations and memories were related to narrators' own agendas and to reveal diverse identifications within the Bai Identity.

When I was puzzling over the claims that a Bai Identity was located in a common history and residency in Dali prefecture, which would actually make the Bai identity appear as no different from a regional or native-place identity as elsewhere in China, my senior informants would not agree that Bai Identity can be treated as a locality identity. Physical difference between Bai and others can be found, as they told me, in the nail of the last toe of Bai people's feet, which is always split. They said it was a common practice when conversation about who the 'real' Bai were began to challenge each other to show their feet to see who was 'real' Bai. And this perceived biological index was handy and reliable as they told me. Yet my fieldwork experience in northeast Yunnan also confronted me with a group of people who were demanding to be recognised as Manchu, and one of the pieces of evidence they produced for this was exactly the same as this one. The point is, senses of 'authentic'/less 'authentic' Bai exist widely, the difference lies in the application of different criteria.

4.3.1 The 'authentic' Bai and *jiaguobe*

In the words of my informants, there are 'authentic' Bai, there are *jiaguobe*[29] (a term used by people from Sword County to refer to people who become Bai by marrying into Bai families), and there are 'even more real' Bai, who live in different geographic locations. The so-called 'authentic' and '*jiaguobe*' distinction is only a vernacular classification; it has no administrative or formal standing.

At times of confusion and uncertainty between Han and Bai, one of my informants always suggested:

> You have to go to Phoenix County or Sword County to find the authentic Bai. Those are the authentic Bai. We have changed a lot over the past five decades, but *they* still retain *our* Bai tradition.

Moreover, some of them told me that I could find "even more real" Bai in Nujiang (a prefecture further west on the border of Yunnan province). What made one authentic seemed to lie in geographic residency and spoken language. In addition, the 'authentic' and the 'even more real' Bai were thought to be those who have been less affected by Han culture, according to villagers from near the ancient town of Dali and the western bank of Erhai lake.

I was not able to visit the "even more real" Bai communities in Nujiang Prefecture which is at a considerable distance from where the great bulk of the Bai live. Yet I found some literature written to support or proclaim their 'authentic' status.

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[29] The Bai syllable *jia* means "extending or connecting"; *gu* means "bones", and *be* means "the Bai". "Bones" refers to blood descent, and is a common metaphor in the region. Another term for refering to the 'unauthentic' Bai is *hanbeni*, meaning Han Bai.

They are said to have pure bones (Zhang Xu 1981, 1990), and their oral tradition maintains that they live in the three counties assumed to be origin places of the Bai.[30]

However in Phoenix County and Sword County in Dali prefecture, my interviews and informal conversations with various individuals in these two counties echoed the views I had heard in communities near the ancient town of Dali and the western bank of Erhai lake. People assured me that I had come to the right place to study the Bai because they were the 'authentic' Bai, even though they admitted that they had no evidence for their 'authenticity.' They would call the Bai in Dali valley and the west bank of Erhai *jiaguobe*, literally meaning "Bai from the extended Bai bones". Despite all being in the official Bai category, my informants would explain that "these *jiaguobe* are not real; they became Bai by marrying into Bai families and having Bai bones extended onto them. So they are not pure." No one knows when the term *jiaguobe* started to be used but all agree that it originated with the Bai in Sword County. The 'authentic' Bai went even further to make the point directly: the *jiaguobe* are actually Han or Hanised locals.

In contrast to the 'authentic' Bai, my informants from Dali County and the west bank of Erhai lake would 'confess' that they were less Bai. As one person said that "they call us *jiaguobe* in Sword County, we do not have this word in our vocabulary." In daily conversations, the term *jiaguobe* was often mentioned in a joking way, enough to make a difference but without any contempt or exclusion. People could be quite relaxed and admit that they were *jiaguobe* by saying, "I am a

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[30] See Zhang Xu's (1991) study on the aboriginal surnames, tiger cult and cock cult among the Bai communities in Nujiang. The tiger cult is a common animist belief among Tibeto-Burmese speakers such as the Yi and Lahu in Yunnan.

jiaguobe" And every *jiaguobe* I met, would indicate their Han origin by producing family genealogies.[31] Nevertheless, these people are well accepted within the Bai communities. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, a claim of Han origins functions to reinforce the sense of being Bai.

In a similar way to the Bai-Han division, some Bai use geographic location to classify people and cultural traits. Here it is not an urban-rural binary, but a centre/periphery, valley/mountain or Dali/Nujiang binary.

4.3.2 Geographic factors

Geographic location is often understood as the cause of cultural differences. In the minds of my informants, the differences within the Bai are a result of geographic location, which is expressed in their spoken language.

> You see, you speak Kunming dialect, which is different from Dali dialect; this is exactly the case with the dialects of Sword County and *Haixi* [referring to the west bank of *Erhai* lake] dialect. When you go to Phoenix County, you will find they speak differently from us and other Bai people. I was told there are some Bai in Hunan, and they speak differently from us, too. But the Hunan Bai also worship *benzhu* [local deity] as we do. I am not quite sure about that because I haven't been there, but I heard people who had been there said so. Bai people living in different areas speak differently. " (Zhao, 67y.o. male)

Another informant bluntly spoke what many implied: "Those in Sword County and Phoenix County have not been exposed to the outside much so they have

[31]They also resort to written historical documents or tomb stone inscriptions to prove their Bai-ness. It must be pointed out here that according to Ramsey (1987:167), of 152 Zhuang clans examined in one district of Guangxi Province, not one claimed to be non-Han.

retained and still speak old Bai, more of our Bai language." An interviewee from the two counties agreed:

> We speak differently because we have been isolated by mountains from the outside world for so long, so we are the 'authentic' Bai, we are clear about the difference in the way we speak.

This geographic division should not be mistaken for native-place identity. The Bai are like any other people living in China, who like to refer to themselves by their native places. As mentioned earlier, in the "Han immigrants marrying local women becoming Bai" model, place is crucial. Local women are always assumed to be Bai rather than any other *minzu* category because Dali means the hometown place of the Bai in the minds of my informants and the general Chinese public; just like Lijiang, to the west, which reminds them of the Naxi, regardless of whether or not one is officially designated as such. And we have to keep in mind two point. Firstly, Bai as a *minzu* group label has been well accepted since the 1950s, but it cannot encompass the whole population in Dali prefecture since the Bai population of Dali prefecture is about 35%. Secondly, native place identity is secondary compared with one's *minzu*, if not ethnic, identity. For instance, my informants often pointed out to me randomly at a monthly market: "these people are Bai from Sword County, those are Bai from Phoenix County" guessing by the women's dress and their accent. It is also common to overhear people talk about the Lisu from Sword County or the Yi from Phoenix County.

The differences between the degrees of authenticity are actually not categories strictly defined according to geographic locations as people sometimes

believe. The difference is based on conceptual criteria, which often have to do with cultural factors.

4.3.3 Cultural factors

The same set of cultural criteria that is utilised to mark the external boundaries between the Han, Bai and Yi is also used to mark internal differences between the 'authentic' and *jiaguobe*. The most striking features are spoken language and ancestor worship.[32]

To ordinary people, whether a spoken language (in most cases referring to a dialect) is spoken fluently or not is still a decisive factor. Spoken language is used as a criterion to differentiate the Bai from the Han, as well as among different degrees of Bai-ness. But local people approach this issue differently from politicians, anthropologists and elites. In spoken Bai language, the Han are referred to as "*sua han-hua*" (Han speaking) while the Bai are "*sua be-ni*" (Bai speaking).[33] Xiao (male, 49) noted: "As soon as two Bai get together, we cannot help talking in Bai right away, regardless of other people's presence."

Spoken language is also used to differentiate 'authentic' Bai and *jiaguobe*. The 'authentic' Bai cannot *sua han-hua* (verb, speak Han). As a *jiaguobe* confessed

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[32] Surnames are also listed as an index because until the 1940s some Bai communities did not have surnames, and surnames are regarded as a fundamental carrier of Han Chinese identity in the English literature (see Ebrey 1996). According to Zhan Chengxu and Zhang Xu (1990: 86), these Bai people's ancestors were surnamed *He* after a Lijiang chief who had this surname in the Qing Dynasty around 1489. After they moved out of Lijiang and settled in Nujiang, they discarded the surname they had ever had. The authors did not provide any clue regarding the reasons for the migration and the abandonment of the surname. So lack of ancestor worship and surnames are viewed as important criteria for being 'even more real' Bai.

[33] See also Yokoyama (1991).

about the 'authentic' Bai, "their language is still the 'authentic' [Bai]; some of the words are very difficult for us to understand." An interviewee who is 'more' Bai proudly proclaimed to me: "we are the real ones, they [referring to those in the ancient town area and west bank of Erhai lake] are becoming Han, and they cannot speak our language."[34] Spoken language is an internal marker as well as an audible marker to maintain external boundaries.[35] The fact that the Bai own the language is more important than merely speaking it because language-owning is part of one's heritage and cultural resources. The 'authentic' Bai possess *more* of the old Bai language than the *jiaguobe*.

Ancestor worship is another index of identity and differentiation. As previously discussed, ancestor worship is characterised as a Han/Bai tradition both by scholars and by my village informants on different occasions. Ancestor-worship is often cited by my informants, *not as a symbol of Hanisation but of a superior 'civilised' Bai identity*! And ancestor-worship is used to deal with the Yi and the 'authentic' Bai at the same time. The *jiaguobe* differentiate themselves from the Yi

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[34] Similarly, it is believed the "real" Naxi can be only found in mountainous districts far from the influence of the Han (Chao 1996). Generally speaking, ethnic people in the valleys and close to towns are not regarded as "authentic" by others, or by themselves. They are considered as Hanised: the more Han tradition they share, the less "ethnic" they become. This internalized division between "real" Bai fosters the image of those "real" ethnic people living in an insulated and "backward" condition. Such discourse conceptualizes and reinforces a sense of superiority among those who consider themselves "not real" and "Hanised".

[35] See Leach (1960) for a theoretical elaboration. While Leach is concerned with ethnicity, I am concerned with identity which is labelled as ethnic. There are three dialects recognised in the Bai language (Allen 2004), which automatically presupposes that people in Sword County and Phoenix County are branches of the Bai stock. Dialect grouping reflects a degree of this 'more' Bai and 'less' Bai division.

by the fact that they practice ancestor worship while the Yi practice animism (see Chapter Five for the complexity in Bai religious practices). Yet *jiaguobe* are also different from the 'authentic' Bai in the same way. The *jiaguobe* practice ancestor worship, while the 'authentic' Bai mainly practice animism. The latter may not necessarily worship ancestors like the Han and *jiaguobe*. In addition, the 'authentic' Bai do not use Han surnames. Nevertheless, according to my observations, in Bai religious practices, be they 'authentic' or *jiaguobe,* the Bai all worship both ancestors and animist cults, and more importantly, *benzhu* (village deity).

It must be clarified that these differences are not considered by the Bai themselves to indicate that 'authentic' Bai are more like other non-Han peoples, while the *jiaguobe* are like the Han. Instead, the differences were only made within the Bai category, which I assume is because the *jiaguobe* have become Hanised (*hanhua*) to such an extent that they have started to doubt and are not confident enough to claim, a full Bai identity.

It seems to me that the differences between Han and Bai, the 'authentic' Bai, *jiaguobe* and the 'even more real' Bai are all maintained for the sake of establishing a Bai Identity. The 'authentic' Bai seem to be content to have the *jiaguobe* articulate their voices for the group and to strive for the overall benefits and higher prestige of the pan-Bai category. The *jiaguobe* seem to be content to have the 'authentic' Bai maintain what they all identify as a Bai culture, so they can also enjoy what the Bai label brings.

In addition, the *jiaguobe* consume the 'authenticity' that the 'authentic' Bai have preserved, displaying nostalgia for their ethnicity. On 28th May 2003, the

anniversary of the City God which was the biggest annual event of the temple in Spring Town, the temple organisation hired a local cameraman to document the grand day and make a VCD. The 52 minute VCD is kept in the temple as a digital Ill. album that the temple carer screens for friends and relatives who visit the temple. The video is a documentary chronicle of what happened on that day, mostly the intercultural relationships and social interactions.

What makes it relevant to Bai Identity and my thesis is that the filmmaker demonstrated the internal classification in the actual setting of a temple anniversary. There were three dancing groups on the day. The three groups came from different areas within the county and ranged from the 'authentic' Bai to *jiaguobe*, which was visible and audible in terms of their costumes, dancing style, music and spoken language.

The first two dancing groups were what the Bai would identify as 'authentic' Bai. In the video, we do not see them much except at the time of the dancing. They attracted a big crowd of spectators. The recording of the dances by the 'authentic' Bai ran for almost four minutes, including detailed close-ups of the dancers from head to toe, and slow-motion pictures, while only one minute-and-a-half were allotted to the *jiaguobe* group. The 'authentic' Bai dance was chosen to meet the gaze of the targeted *jiaguobe* viewers, and illustrated the preferred form of experiencing authenticity and ethnic Bai culture. Like any other outsiders, the urban Bai can consume what it is to be 'authentic' Bai on such a special occasion.

So what is the purpose of this Bai Identity?

4.4 Manipulating *minzu* identities

In the anthropological literature, ethnicity is often argued to be associated with competition for resources (e.g. A. P. Cohen, 1985:99). In the Bai communities I studied, this is also the case, except that scarce resources mean different things that may differ from individual to individual.

4.4.1 'Becoming' Bai and competing for resources

Having conducted interviews on who the Bai are with dozens of old people in the villages I stayed in, I got almost identical replies as discussed earlier: referring to the time division (before/after "Liberation") and the 'authentic' Bai in Phoenix County and Sword County. I first incorrectly hypothesised that Bai Identity was not used as a marker to compete for resources. The narrations of ordinary villagers seemed to have various purposes and motivations which were not necessarily always relevant to ethnic identity. Yet I could not understand why my informants were all ready to proclaim a clear Bai Identity all of a sudden for reasons I could not see right away.

Mr. Li kept insisting on his Bai-ness to me:

> Our ancestor Li Zhu, the village deity, was said to be among those who were expelled [from central China]. He then settled down with the local Li family and later took up the Li surname before he became our *benzhu* (deity).

It was difficult for me to understand why he kept insisting on this blood tie with the village deity since his ethnic status had been established in the official registration documents at the very beginning when this needed to be done. Later I

found out that all Mr. Li's efforts were for one purpose: to prove his credibility and legitimacy as a spiritual medium. Both Li and his wife are amateur divination practitioners. Mr. Li was therefore interested in emphasizing or amplifying the influence of his alleged blood tie with Li Zhu, the village deity of the Bai village. This extraordinary family history could be the best evidence to validate their role as mediums and to legitimatize their practice. Mr. Li would emphasise his family history when we were with other local villagers. All these efforts served as a resource for potential personal gain vis-à-vis the other Bai in the same village, and to me, an outsider who he assumed was interested in "superstitious practices" and was a potential client. Behind such primordialist claims, therefore, there may lie other instrumental considerations.

The same informant (Mr. Li, male, 58 years old) told me the following on another occasion:

> Let me tell you this, it is true we are Bai. It is also true my ancestor migrated from Hunan, I am one of Li Zhu's descendents; his tombstone with some inscriptions is still there in the mountain. And you know what, my second daughter-in-law, this boy's mother [pointing to one of the four children in the house], was Han, but now she is Bai. You ask why? Because she joined a Bai family through marriage. That's it! Believe it or not.[36]

What Mr. Li intended to show me seemed to be that *minzu* status was at his disposal; he registered his daughter-in-law under the Bai category, most probably even without her knowledge.[37]

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[36]See Rack (2005:33-34) for more cases of changing from Han to ethnic minority identities.

[37] Since this is a Bai area, I assume there were not enough cross-checks at the registration. The daughter-in-law was running their business away from home with her husband, and the father-in-law

Besides Mr. Li, three others in the same village told me that they had female in-laws who were not Bai, but they *are* now after marrying into their families. Compared with the model of "Han immigrants marrying local women and becoming Bai" discussed previously, a Han woman marrying into a Bai family is a new model. This model of becoming Bai is a convenient explanation, which has been socially and now is constitutionally acceptable. To my informants, this is part of how the Bai as a group originally formed. I interviewed one of these women who had married into a Bai community from a non-Bai background and found that she actually did not really care whether she was recorded as Bai or not. She said:

> It is all the same nowadays. In the past [prior to the 1990s] they [Bai villagers] often manipulated this because kids were supposed to take the ethnicity of the mother. By so doing, they could ensure their children or grandchildren enjoyed the benefits reserved for ethnic peoples.

Taking into consideration other interviews on the same topic, I was able to see clearly that the manipulation of official *minzu* identity is commonly a response to such potential advantages. However, such a practice has recently lost much of its pragmatic value due to changes in state policies towards *minzu* people who reside in urban and well-developed areas.

Under the socialist planned economy prior to 1980, the free market economy was criticized as 'the tail of capitalism' and rooted out. Everything became scarce: basic daily necessities including rice, vegetable oil, meat, cloth etc., were allocated only to urban population through a limited number of coupons. Obtaining urban or non-agrarian residency therefore came to be seen as access to basic necessities since

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took it for granted that she should have prepared to become a Bai when she married into this family.

most of my research subjects were either rural or came from a rural background. In the local political domain, ethnic status became a springboard to get promoted. In terms of further education, any ethnic minority identity could help a person to gain secondary school/university admission after 1978 as the entry requirements were lower.[38] Under such circumstances, to rural dwellers urban residency might have been the most attractive advantages, to a public servant it was privileged promotion in the workplace, to teenagers it was admission to universities and colleges.

Identification with an ethnic group can be motivated by the competition for scarce resources from a socio-political perspective (Leach 1954) and from an economic perspective (A. Cohen 1969a, 1974a). [39]. But as A. P. Cohen (1994a&b) points out, ethnic identity is also based on self consciousness. This is illustrated in the following section. What I am arguing here is that notions of resources can be perceived differently. Not all villagers want to be identified as Bai. Some consider Han to be culturally superior, while others seem to identify with the Bai out of self consciousness.

4.4.2 Retaining Han Identity

In a Han-dominated village near the ancient town of Dali, some descendants of Han immigrants I met told me that they had not tried to identify with the Bai even after the attractions of the post-1949 affirmative action took effect (see Ill. 16). These people insisted on the fact that their ancestors were Han migrants and they were Han. They still identify with their Han origin in spite of the fact that their ancestors and

[38] Such preferential policy is changing and is now more based on one's regional location rather than ethnic background.

[39] This is especially true when land and water are owned and controlled by the state in China.

they themselves have married local women, and their wives and children are registered as Bai in official documents. One such interviewee simply stated "we are Han, our ancestors have passed on this message for generations; there is no need to explain that, it is just a fact our seniors told us" which was a common view. At such times, people will resort to spoken language to demonstrate how they retain their Han traits:

> We all can speak Bai language, yet still we *do not* want to speak in Bai. … I married a Bai woman, and my children are Bai, but I was brought up as Han. And I know several lineages are Han in this village; we were the first settlers. Later a couple of Bai households joined us; we were very kind and generous. We let them settle down on the outskirts of the village and they have expanded ever since.[40] (Brsui, 56, male)

However, when we met other villagers, he actually communicated with them in Bai. In the eyes of this 56-year-old, Bai language was simply a communication skill separable from his identity. But Bai spoken language can be a marker to resist indigenisation, and to negotiate between Han and Bai identities. And the Han in Bai communities are also subject to further differentiation among locals. As Mr. Zhang said: "we are *kejia* (meaning guest) Han people, so we speak Han, local Han speak *minjia*, Bai villagers speak their Bai speech." (Ery Zhang, 63, Han).

In another village, Han identity may be simply unconsciously maintained.

> Yes, we are Han, all of us in this village. We do not have so many temple events; we only celebrate once a year, on the 4th day of the 4th lunar month. We did not have *benzhu*, not even before liberation. Although we worship

[40]It was quite likely that identification with Han was much related with land rights in history as David Faure (1989, 1992) argues.

> *wenchang*, *guangong*, *benzhu* and *guanyin* in our temple festival now, before Liberation [1949] only *wenchang* had an image, all the other three only had name tablets. Yes, strange, how come all the neighbouring villages are Bai and we are Han?

This informant made it clear that *benzhu* worship has gained more visibility, if not significance, in their temple festival in the past five decades, which is common in some local temples in Dai prefecture. Like the previous case, his identification with the Han is a truism. This demonstrates that Bai and Han identities still matter to the Bai and the people around them. The people in this village have chosen to self-identify as Han despite the fact that the Bai may enjoy some advantages in accessing resources. Further investigation shows that those who retain Han identity perceived themselves higher in status than other villagers.

4.5 Conclusion

So "ethnicity is a matter of degree" (Williams 1989:415) displayed in different aspects of local social life. Time divisions (after/before the NECP), memories of Han ancestry, recent history, geographic location, spoken language and ancestor worship all become "sites of identification" (Antze and Lambek 1996: preface) in defining how much percentage of Bai-ness one possesses. The NECP is a divisional device that marked the use of Bai as an "umbrella term" (Schein, 2000:96) or a prefixed "pan-" term to embrace all subgroups. The Bai category has become divided into different degrees of being Bai in different localities. My informants' own

memories of the recent past illustrate how they perceive they have come to be Bai, or to be the less Bai.

The complexity of internal differentiations is helpful for us to see their own way in dealing with folk categories as well as state legitimated categories (Starr 1992). They are significant in defining the Bai label firmly in the minds of people both inside and outside of the Bai category. Even at times when their sense of being Bai seems to be turned on and off, there is no ambiguity when they speak of an 'authentic' Bai as opposed to a *jiaguobe* or a 'even more real' Bai. The Han and Bai division is a tricky balance which they have maintained because they want to be just enough Bai to differentiate themselves from the Han. On the other hand, they also identify with Han features, just enough to stand on a higher platform vis-à-vis other ethnic minorities. And Han influences have themselves been encoded with 'Bai' meanings. Sometimes, the Bai are what the Han are, thus differentiating them from the Yi; at other times, the Bai are what the Han are not, thus maintaining a Bai identity despite internal differentiations between the 'authentic' Bai and the *jiaguobe*. Thus, Han culture becomes an important reference of Bai-ness. The less Han influence one possesses, the more one becomes real Bai.

I propose to coin the term "partial identification" to characterise the current Bai identities rather than "double identification" (Duan Weiji 2004). Partial identification indicates the subtle balance the Bai are trying to maintain, while double identification implies a full possession of two group identities. The Bai, as I have tried to represent here, are engaged in varying degrees with the Han-Bai division. They detach themselves frequently from a full Bai identity and express a bit of Han

and vice versa, pushing themselves somewhere in between the dispersed spectrum of Bai and Han identities.

All the different degrees of being Bai, including those who subjectively identify more with the Han, are contributing tremendously to the Bai Identity as either a reference or counter reference for the 'authentic' Bai and the 'even more real' Bai. These differences contribute to the transmission of a fluid ethnic identity (pre-1950s) and the *minzu* category (post-1950s) to shape a Bai Identity, making the empty state label a concrete one which has enabled the people to have an ethnic card to play. One of my informants spelled it out clearly:

> Of course *minzu* identity is important. The real ethnic identity in our minds is important in the sense that it is part of us, an important criterion for being accepted socially within the Bai community where no one really cares what *minzu* you are on your formal ID card. At the same time, the official registration is important when one accesses preferences for promotion and admission to universities. In this domain, one must be able to produce *minzu* identity on one's ID card. Community acceptance and subjective identification are useless at such moments because they will not be counted as valid at all.

This chapter has also illustrated that being defined as ethnically distinctive does not necessarily entail implications of social inferiority and low class, as Honig (1989, 1992) seems to assume in her depiction of the "Subei ren" as an ethnic status. Subei identity is analysed as ethnic based on the fact that Subei identity is a low-caste one compared with Shanghai identity (Honig 1989, 1992). This is not the case with the Bai.

This chapter has demonstrated that the state defined category has set up a referential tie/bond for the different degrees of the Bai, binding them together and synchronising *a* Bai Identity. The next chapter will look into how religious practices have become an "invariant attribute" (Wu & Foster 1982b:286) of Bai-ness.

Chapter Five

Identity Manifested in Religious Practices

Ill. 17: Warrior *benzhu* with his parents and generals. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 18: Literati *benzhu* and wife. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 19: Main *benzhu*, his two wives and followers. Zhou Village. 2004.

Ill. 20: Literati and warrior *benzhu*. West Town. 2004.

Ill. 21: One of the nine *benzhu* in its original site. West Town. 2004.

Ill. 22: Common secondary deity: God of Fortune. Zhou Village. 2004.

Ill. 23: Common guardian deities: Rooster, Pig, Horse and Ox. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 24: Common guardian deities: God of the Mountain and the Land. Colour Village. 2004.

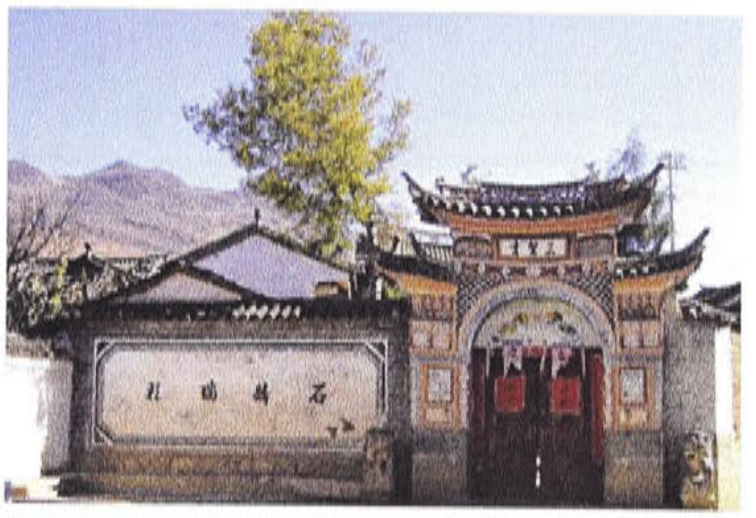
Ill. 25: Common secondary deities: Son-giving Guanyin. Zhou Village. 2004.

Ill. 26: Duan Zongbang and his mistress. Stream Village. 2005.

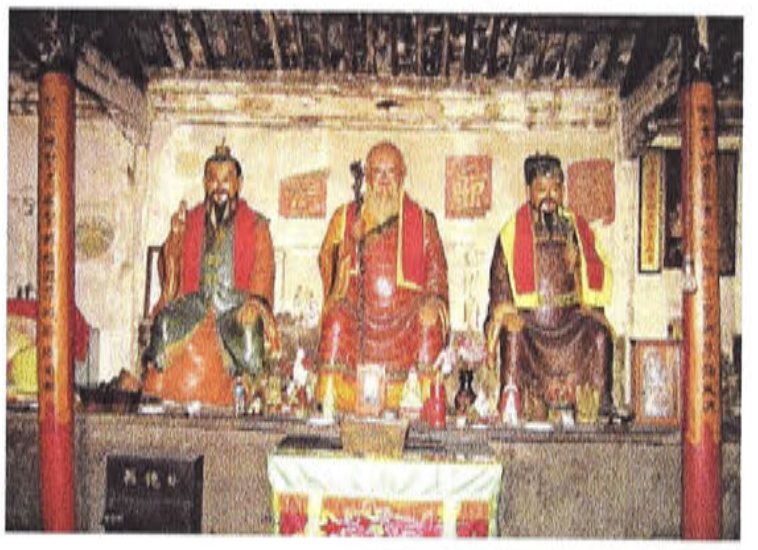
Ill. 27: Kublai Khan and Duan Zongbang (the small image on stage right). West Town. 2005.

Ill. 28: Lady Bejie and husband. Fountain County. 2004.

Ill. 29: *Benzhu*: General Li Mi. Xiaguan. 2005

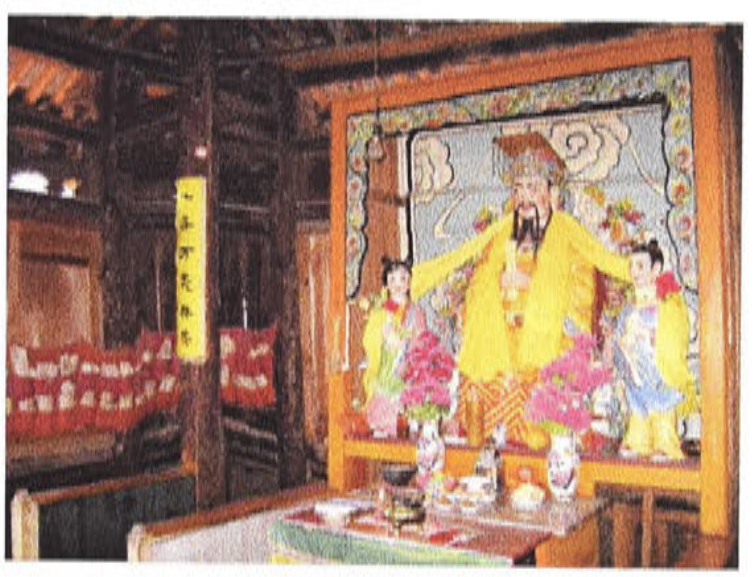


Ill. 30: Non-*benzhu* temple. San Jiao Gong. Splendour Village. 2004.

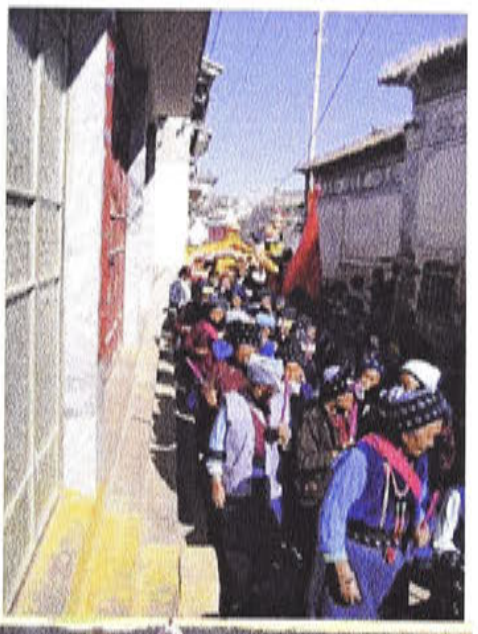


Ill. 31: Non-*benzhu* cults. Three gods in San Jiao Gong. West Town. 2004.

Ill. 32: Non-*benzhu* cults. City God. Fountain County. 2004



Ill. 33: Non-*benzhu* cults. Jade Emperor. West Town. 2004.



Ill. 34: *Benzhu* procession. Going to get the *benzhu* image. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 35: *Benzhu* procession: Greeting *benzhu.* Splendour Village. 2004.

Ill. 36: *Benzhu* procession: The parade of Duan Zongbang. Stream Villagers. 2005.

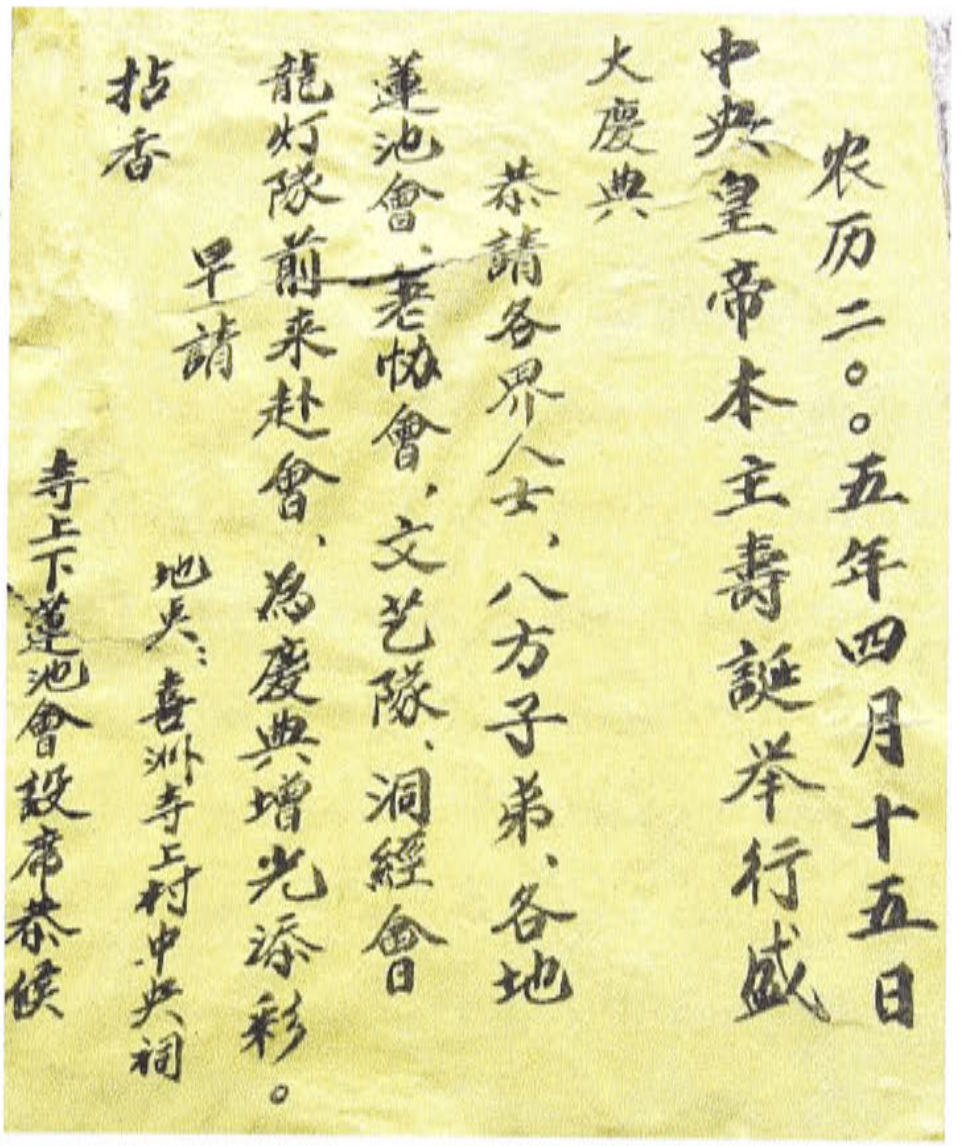
Ill. 37: *Benzhu* procession: The parade of Duan Zongbang. Horse Villagers. 2005.

Ill. 38: Sacrifices before the Bai New Year dinner. Colour Village. 2004. (photo courtesy of Hong Yu)

Ill. 39: Raw sacrifices. 2005.

Ill. 40: Cooked sacrifices. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 40a: Poster for *benzhu* procession. West Town. 2005.



Translation:

The 15th of the 4th lunar month 2005 is the anniversary of the central emperor benzhu (zhongyang huangdi benzhu).

We sincerely invite everyone to participate in the celebration, [including] believers from afar, all Lotus Associations [lao mama hui], Senior People's Associations, singing and Dancing teams, Dongjing Associations and Dragon-dance teams.

Venue: Zhongyang Ci, Shishan Village, West Town.

The Lotus Association of Shishan Village will provide the meal.

Chapter Five

Identity Manifested in Religious Practices

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that Bai Identity and ethnicity have been contested notions since the 1950s. Bai Identity may be delineated by state-defined demarcation (as discussed in Chapters One and Two), by local self-expressed solidarity in textual products (Chapter Three), or in selected memories and the internal classifications of laypersons (Chapter Four).[1] This chapter examines *benzhu* cults because these cults have been widely practiced in Bai communities and well discussed as an important component of a "unique Bai culture" (Xu Jiarui 1979[1949], Tian Huaiqing 1987, Zhan Chengxu 1990, 1994; Yang Zhengye 1994, Ma Yao 1995, Li Zhengqing 1998).[2]

Benzhu are patron gods in Bai communities. *Benzhu* cults are a mixed practice of animist belief, ancestor worship, Daoism[3] and a "degraded form of Buddhism" (Davies 1970[1909]:129) and are the most common religious practice in Dali. It is said that the Yi, Lisu or Naxi communities almost never worship *benzhu,* except for "a few Yi and Han peoples who co-inhabit with the Bai" (Li Zuanxu 1991:31). This chapter aims to show how *benzhu* cults have been a resource for Bai Identity rather than describing the customs or religious practices in detail. Instead of treating *benzhu*

[1] Harrell mentioned the same point when he was studying the Yi.

[2] *Benzhu* cults are often discussed as *Acarya*, a Bai religion (see Li Donghong 2000 for more discussion).

[3] For an elaboration of Daoism in the Nanzhao kingdom (752-902 AD) and the religious practices of the Bai people, see Guo Wu (2000:77-115; 246-252).

cults as a reflection of local society or as part of a social organisation that formal part of shares a common structure with the Chinese state as earlier anthropologists did with Chinese religion,[4] this chapter conceptualises the construction of Bai Identity in *benzhu* cults. This is meant to add dimensions of complexity to our understanding of both the nature and the making of Bai Identity. I will first describe the role of *benzhu* in the minds of Bai villagers before illustrating how *benzhu* cults are mobilised to accommodate socio-political changes, which might be interpreted as formulating "cultural resistance" in Weller's (1994) words.

Scholars such as Shryock (1931), F. K. Hsu (1952), C. K. Yang (1961), Feuchtwang (1974) and Watson (1985) have focused on the role of religion in Chinese social life and societal structure. Their functional interpretation and structural analyses have achieved a masterly representation of the relationship between the state and popular religious practices in southern and southeast China. Structure-based approaches are efficient at accounting for continuity, but have difficulty in analysing change, agency and emic perceptions. Moreover, the focus on social structure common to all these authors tends to overlooks identity issues in popular religious practices.

This chapter takes an identity dynamics approach to illustrate both change and continuity in local religious practices. I argue that the subjective replacement of *tuzhu* by *benzhu* in the terminology of local religious practices originally demonstrated a statement of ethnic identity (not Bai identity, though, at that stage). After the 1950s,

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[4] This chapter also benefited from Weller (1987: 37-59, 129-143) who tries to avoid a structural-functional approach even if his informants made an explicit structural analogy between the gods and the government, or social and religious systems as Durkheim and his predecessors had done.

the integration of *benzhu* cults into the state-defined *Baizu* category occurred, and *benzhu* cults became what Barth (1969:38) calls "boundary-defining cultural differentiae" which distinguished Bai religious practices from all the other practices in China, although there are in fact more similarities than differences between Bai and non-Bai practices.[5] Other religious practices co-exist with *benzhu* cults in Bai communities. Nevertheless, the term *benzhu* has enabled the Bai to make their cults appear different from non-Bai practices by means of "différance" (Derrida 1982[1972]).

5.1 Bai New Year dinner in 2004

In 2004, the *benzhu* procession in Colour Village started on the 27th in January (see Ill. 34). The procession[6] was a grand event that involved the whole village symbolically, although Colour Village is historically divided into two sections, the upper *deng* and the lower *deng*. On the 30th, it was the turn of the lower section (*deng*) villagers to take the *benzhu* statues to their quarters from the altar in the upper

[5] Earlier research on Chinese religion was mostly conducted in Taiwan or Hong Kong and was often concerned with the ramification of state power (see F. K. Hsu, 1952, C.K. Yang 1961, Jordan 1972, Feuchtwang 1974, 1977; A. Wolf 1974a, 1974c; Freedman 1974, Deglopper 1974, Harrell 1974, Ahern 1981, Watson 1985, Weller 1987). James Watson (1985) points out that local elites, sharing a common cultural tradition fostered by a standardised educational curriculum, maintain strong ties with both the centre and their region. But *benzhu* cults carve out a sphere of oppositional tactics against any form of domination and dismantle the centre-periphery structure.

[6] In processions, images of deities riding in sedan chairs accompanied by bands and costumed troupes are taken to the shrine in the village. See similar procedures and practices in Zhao Shiyi's (2002) analysis of Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) historical documents in Jiangsu, Fujian, Guangdong Shandong and Zhejiang. See also Feuchtwang (1992).

section. Traditionally, households from Li and Wang lineages have taken turns to organise the event, and a few families from these two lineages have the privilege of preparing the offering tables opposite the *benzhu* shrine, while the rest of the village simply brings food to offer to the *benzhu* shrine in the village before and after it is cooked. The very food they offer is eventually taken home to be consumed by the family, symbolising reunion with *benzhu* and ancestors. This annual dinner is an important annual family meal and has a lot to do with the sense of being Bai.

At that time, I received several dinner invitations, but no one told me their special significance. My first invitation was from my host on the 29th. My host insisted that I must come home early and have dinner with them, and I thought it was his generous hospitality as usual. I declined because I was sure that I would be home late, especially when the next day was a special day. My host was a very down-to-earth farmer who was a man of few words. He did not explain anything to me but just kept insisting "come home early and have dinner with us tonight, it is New Year today," so I did not take it seriously. I kept declining, and then left the house.

That morning, I received a second invitation from an 83-year old man on the street. I mistook it as a courtesy and responded in a corresponding way by accepting symbolically. Then another 82-year old and his 9-year old grandson extended their invitation. Around noon time, another 78-year old offered his invitation and explained to me "this is our real Bai new year eve, although we also celebrate the Han lunar New Year. This one is more important. We feel it an honour to invite guests home to join us." I then started to realise the seriousness of all these dinner invitations and was worried about my casual promises. Before I could sort things out

by myself, one of my informants came all the way from another village and pulled me onto a mini-motor-tricycle and took me to his home ten kilometres away.

All these invitations were extended by the patriarchs of different families. The fact that I was the only stranger in the village whom they knew and could trust, and my background as an "educated" urbanite could be reasons for all the invitations. But what is important is: it was the Bai New Year, which was discerning from the Han Chinese lunar New Year, which fell one week earlier in 2004. The special thing about this occasion was the fact that the *benzhu* image was sitting in the village rather than in his usual temple about five kilometres away at the foot of the mountains.

I discovered that this Bai dinner is usually shared in the main living room of the house in front of the family shrine where slogans commemorating Heaven-Earth-Emperor-Ancestors-Teachers and ancestors' tablets are located.[7] This dinner is meant to honour the *benzhu*, ancestors, the whole family, and guests.[8] What makes it different are the presence of the *benzhu* image in the village and the deity's consumption of the very food they offered, both raw and cooked in turns. This dinner is more than a family gathering, it constitutes a special Bai occasion that they know and pass on as a special occasion of being Bai. The dinner has become symbolically an emblem, expressing and reaffirming Bai Identity.

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[7] See F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:183-185) for a detailed description of a family shrine.

[8] Another occasion when people invite guests to join in the family is when people visit ancestral graveyards, recorded as *dso mu* by Fitzgerald (1941:104). For a detailed description of this occasion, see F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]: 40-50,179-83)

5.2 *Benzhu* cults

It is very difficult to neatly define what Bai *benzhu* cults are. When we look into such cults, we have to keep in mind that in Dali like elsewhere in China as discussed by C. .K. Yang (1961), Deglopper (1974), Feuchtwang (1974, 1977, 1996),Watson (1985, 1991) among others, religious practices are not characterised by differences of doctrine and dogma as in major world religions. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and animist beliefs have existed in this area for more than 1,000 years and have merged over time with or into *benzhu* cults.[9] To an outside observer, *benzhu* cults may not appear markedly different from local deity cults in other parts of China. Between 2003 and 2005, I participated in three *benzhu* processions in four different villages (see Ills. 34-37). I found it difficult to discern how these processions differ from local deity processions elsewhere in China. What C. P. Fitzgerald describes still holds true today:

> The Min Chia [*minjia*], who have absorbed so much of the Chinese culture, also worship deities and practice rites which can be classified as Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian (or ancestor worship). But if one concludes from this that it is true to say that the Min Chia, or the Chinese, have three "religions", in the sense in which the word is understood in the West it would be a profound misapprehension of the real character of their beliefs. The educated classes, who are aware of the separate origin of the three systems, do not believe in any of them; the less educated, who practise the rites of all three, are not conscious of any such distinctions (1941:93).

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[9] MacKerras (1988) notes that shamanistic rites coexist with Buddhist in *benzhu* cults. And religious beliefs among the Bai It must be clarified that to the worshippers in a temple, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism may be a local version of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism different from practices in Taiwan and the southern China Han regions (see Shryock 1931, Watson 1985).

To the Bai, *benzhu* cults are all about making offerings. This means to burn incense, candles and paper money for ancestors or ghosts sometimes; to attend temple events; to contribute time and resources to maintain the temple, and to visit temples on special occasions. Practitioners do not necessarily understand *benzhu* cults in the same way and to the same degree. If we focus on the connection between *benzhu* cults and Bai Identity, we will see "doing" is actually less significant than "encoding meanings." It is through encoded meanings that state symbols and standardised practices fit into a local context and become a resource of Bai identity. In a temple, Bai identity is not expressed through the religious backgrounds of temple images; rather it is articulated by the "webs of significance" created and recreated by pilgrims and temple carers in that "the sense we make is 'ours'" (A. P. Cohen 1985:17).

5.2.1 Who and what are *benzhu*?

Benzhu idols cover different kinds of Chinese deities in China (see Shryock 1931:45; C. K. Yang 1961:58-103; Feuchtwang 1974, 1977; A. Wolf 1974 a, 1974b, 1974c; Ahern 1981; Weller 1987,1994), which include territorially based compatriots, legendary heroes, outstanding historical civic and political officials, Buddhist/Daoist gods, ancestors and ghosts. Wherever temples are built in honour of someone's contribution to the local community (for harnessing rivers, defending against banditry, rebellions or invaders, bringing relief from plagues, famine and calamities), we can find versions of these historical personages in *benzhu* cults. Blessing cults and merit cults, ancestor-worship, God of Fortune, the Kitchen God, other secondary deities

and animist deities all have their places in *benzhu* cults. *Benzhu* practice is a 'storehouse' for everything, which leads nowhere in terms of any attempt to define it in any sort of religious terms. Arthur Wolf's (1974c) trinity of Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors is dismantled.

In addition, *benzhu* are heterogeneous in their ethnic backgrounds.[10] *Benzhu* include deities from the Bai, Han, Yi, Hui and Mongolians. When we talk about the ethnic backgrounds of *benzhu*, we have to keep in mind two facts. Firstly, ethnic difference was widely recognised prior to the 1950s although the current *minzu* categories are a post-1950s invention. Secondly, *benzhu* cults started long before the demarcation of the Bai category. These two facts transcend the boundaries of current *minzu* categories and may help illustrate why ethnic differences of *benzhu* are not a source of conflict or absurdity to their believers. The Bai do not seem to care whether their *benzhu* are Bai, Han, Hui or Yi; they worship them pragmatically as long as they are traditional *benzhu* that deliver.[11] Different individuals often emphasised to me: "we are honouring whoever did good for, or glorified the Bai people."[12] As this common statement and the multi-ethnic origins of *benzhu* show, benzhu cults are no longer merely a label for local religious practices. *Benzhu* cults have acquired ethnic meanings over the past five decades and these meanings have become important references of Bai Identity.

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[10] The social backgrounds of *benzhu* are also diverse, but this will be omitted in my discussion since it is not the focus of this chapter.

[11] Siu (1989:295) made a similar observation in Pearl River Delta: villagers do not care who a deity is as long as it delivers. See also C.K. Yang's discussion (1961).

[12] Among Han Chinese, the worship of gods is a matter of respect for people with worthy accomplishments (see Weller 1987:127).

To deal with the complexity, each *benzhu* temple houses one or two leading gods (see Ills. 17-21) and a number of secondary gods, depending on its size.[13] The wives, attendants and followers of the leading gods may become secondary gods (e.g. Ills. 22-25). The worship of one *benzhu* does not rule out other deities. People never treat their *benzhu* as the only gods; instead, they arrange *benzhu* in a temple to avoid confrontations and offences. Temples are built "to please, not to house deities" (C. P. Fitzgerald 1941:94) for the Bai. They know very well that the literati deity in *wenmiao* (school temples) and the god of war in *wumiao* (military temples) are from the Han culture.

However, instead of viewing these gods as foreign, the Bai made them part of themselves by housing and worshipping them. Seen in this light, we will understand why these people are not worried that in a *benzhu* temple the activities are similar to those in non-*benzhu* temples visually (statues of gods, offerings, worshippers), audibly (sutra-chanting and prayers), and sensually (scent of burning incense and cooked food-offerings).[14] As said before, the doing is not so important but it is the meaning which makes *benzhu* cults a Bai resource.

Most temple-goers actually cannot recall or do not know the names of the *benzhu*, but they do know the *benzhu*'s imperial titles.[15] Imperial titles mark their

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[13] As for Chinese temples in general, the patron god of local communities always take the centre seat (see C.K Yang 1961; Aijmer et al. 2000:159). See Ills. 17-29, 34-37, and 60-62.

[14] *Benzhu* cults are much like what Linnekin recorded of a Hawaiian *luau* feast (see David Wu 1989:12; 1990:4), but unlike the Hawaiians and Hawaiian visitors, neither the Bai nor other peoples regard the non-Bai deities in *benzhu* cults as Bai, but at the same time it is these cults which are regarded as particularly Bai by everyone I interviewed, Bai, Han, Yi, or whatever.

[15] This is quite reasonable because in *benzhu* temples, only the imperial titles are inscribed on the name-tablets.

sacredness and legitimacy since it is believed that these titles were granted to the *benzhu* by either the imperial courts or by the goddess Guanyin. We may infer that *benzhu*, at least some *benzhu*, were imposed by the state since entitlements to settlement and territorial authority may explain the origin of some *benzhu* cults. Yet *benzhu* cults are by no means historically passive. deities can be changed and forgotten if they are not delivering or "effective" (*ling),* (C. K. Yang 1961, Feuchtwang 1992 21-24, 81-84). *Benzhu* cults are thus quite dynamic. Deities are not static; they can be changed according to circumstances and are situationally determined.[16]

As noted above, *benzhu* cults do not have doctrines or scriptures, but have a wide range of temples, deities and routine rituals.[17] Basically, there is no professional *benzhu* priest except temple carers hired by *lao mama hui* (the senior women's association).[18] In most cases, members of these women's associations take turns to oversee the daily or regular sacrifices in the temple depending on the size of the temple. This seems to suggest that *benzhu* cults are not defined by doctrine and

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[16] For instance, the nine-*benzhu*-temple was very famous in F. K. Hsu's days (Chiu Tan Shen) 1971[1948]:193) and well documented in some books about *benzhu* stories, but now there is only one *benzhu*, rather than nine there in the open court of a residential building on the site of the old temple.

[17] Different temples have different ritual calendars. For a list of events in the ritual calendar in West Town see F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]: 21-22).

[18] Historians have argued that there were some *benzhu* priests, *duoxibo,* who lived at home and raised families. It seems to me that they were like shamans. The temple carer may be a man or woman who has no rights in decision-making, or in joining the sutra chanting. During my fieldwork, I met only one temple manager, a retired public servant who took care of the temple income, decided on what shrines to build, and led religious services. See C.K.Yang (1961:81-103) for more accounts of temple managers in Chinese temples. See Duan Bin (2002) for an elaboration of the *lao mama hui* in Bai communities. *Lao mama hui* is a common term villagers would use to refer to different senior women's organisations with different theological orientations.

scripture, but by correct praxis. But what is important is that their "own reified presence and corporate action" (Sahlins 2004:159) have evoked the collective consciousness of the Bai. Recently, *lao mama hui*[19] have become one of the symbols of Bai ethnicity precisely because of their engagement in *benzhu* cults. The women in these associations manifest Bai-ness in their visits to *benzhu* and local temples, their telling of *benzhu* stories, and their organisation of celebrations and processions.[20]

When asked to differentiate between the Bai and other ethnic minorities, my interviewees usually contrast *benzhu* cults with animist practices, and explain that *tuzhu* cults are animist. The local Bai often regard non-Bai ethnic minority groups as animists, superstitious in the eyes of many Bai informants. As discussed in Chapter Two, social evolutionism is well accepted in China, even among the general population.

I met quite a few ordinary Bai who believe that ancestor worship and *benzhu* cults are rational and reasonable and a "higher" or more "advanced" form of belief and practice than animist beliefs. They explained that this was because *benzhu* cults are related to one's morality and filial obligations while animist (e.g. *tuzhu*) cults and divination practices are related to individualistic animist beliefs or spirit cults. But they also pointed out at the same time that animist practice is actually very common in *benzhu* cults (see Li Zhengqing 1998:214 and Yang Zhengye 1999 for ethnographic data). Yet animist cults are widely regarded as non-Bai and villagers

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[19] See also Zhao Shiyu (2002) for records on the Guanyin festival in Yangzhou. Their images on various social occasions are salient (See Ills. 2, 34, 35, 43 & 66).

[20] Most of my informants sincerely believe that their *benzhu* are different from the deities of non-Bai peoples.

often put them in an evolutionist framework: "those material cults in *benzhu* are remains of primitive [sic] practices" one informant said, and this was a very common view.

Another fact that helped them to justify a division between the Bai and non-Bai ethnic minorities was that standardised deities[21] such as Confucius, God of Literature (*wenchang*), God of War (*guandi/guangong*),[22] Kueixin, Buddha and Guanyin[23] are very popular in Bai communities. These gods do not share an altar with *benzhu,* but share their temples. But these standardised gods are rare among local non-Bai ethnic minority peoples.

As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, *benzhu* have the most important place in the cosmology of the Bai. My informants were eager to tell me how relations with the *benzhu* affect agricultural productivity, health and well-being. In fact,

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[21] The standardising regulations condemn some practices while identifying some to be preserved, The worship of animism and the Daoist use of charms and magical texts were forbidden and proscribed in *Collection of the Laws of the Republic of China* (1933:810-14 from Duara 1995:109). However, the regulations could be very ambiguous and inconsistent. For instance, the earth god and stove god were preserved while the city god, dragon god and the god of wealth were prohibited (Sakai 1951 from Duara 1995: 109) in the Republic era (1911-1949).

[22]See Feuchtwang 1974 for more about Guandi cult. Guandi is one of the most popular deities of the late imperial period, which is an obvious choice from the Ming novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms. In the novel, Guandi appears as the personification of loyalty.

[23] Guanyin could have many meanings. According to my informants, Guanyin can mean the goddess or a monk. She may transform herself into the image of any ordinary human being. Guanyin is believed to be the first deity who brought life to Dali valley. According to Lien Juichih (2003) Guanyin worship was prominent from the 10th to 15th centuries and was usually claimed as a lineage origin by monks and the ruling class as an important source of authority and legitimacy. Yet, since the Ming dynasty, only prominent lineages claim Guanyin as their ancestral founder. The appeal of Guanyin in Dali lies in the perception of her as a founder of the Dali valley rather than merely as "a woman unpolluted by marriage and childbirth" (Rack 2005:88) or as a Buddhist goddess. Images of Guanyin in different village temples include man and woman, old and young.

families would visit the *benzhu* temple before sowing and after harvesting. They would "report to *benzhu*" when a child is born, when someone gets married, when family members pass away, when one falls ill, and when they build houses and move into a new house. Before and after a family member takes important examinations or is waiting for career promotions, villagers also visit the temple and make sacrifices (see Ills. 38-40) because the *benzhu* are regarded as the most important family members.

The following is an extract from one of my interviews in a temple and suggests how ordinary people identify with *benzhu*:

> Although I live quite far away, I still come and visit this temple regularly, ask him [pointing to the temple caretaker nearby], I never come empty-handed, always bringing in some incense and making some cash contribution. Some people do not believe [in *benzhu*], but I still do although I joined the Party [CCP] when I was working for the government, that's career, I never lost my faith [in *benzhu*]. I don't know if you believe it or not, *benzhu* is always there and protecting us, all the Bai in this village, no matter who you are and where you go. *Benzhu* is blessing me with my pension and good health[24].

What this old man described is not very different from the attitude of temple-goers that C.K.Yang (1961) and James Watson (1985) depicted in southern China. But this old man meant to demonstrate to me his strong faith in the collective Bai *benzhu*. The claim of being distinctively Bai foregrounded his religious belief. The next question here is how to understand *benzhu* cults in themselves.

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[24] By good health, he demonstrated to me and others present that he has strong blood, red cheeks and red palms, while folks at his age often look dark and withered. Another implication of this remark is that he was trying to encourage me to make some monetary contribution, which often happens in temples.

There is no mention of the term in early English scholarship on the predecessors of the Bai. C.P. Fitzgerald (1941) covers what are called *benzhu* today in his study of ancestor worship (93-112), various gods (112-132), and myth and magic (132-148). Fitzgerald did not mention the term *benzhu* but mentioned the worship of Ber Dser.[25] On the other hand he did not ignore the important role of various religious practices in the social and agricultural life of the Bai. Francis Hsu (1971[1948]) regarded Bai religious practice as Han ancestor worship and spirit cults (28-53; 131-192). The communal worship that F. K. Hsu described is very much closer to some of what is labelled as *benzhu* cults today (193-199). There is no label that may encompass the same range of cults either in F. K. Hsu's work or Fitzgerald ethnography.[26]

It seems from these ethnographies of Fitzgerald and F. K. Hsu that the term *benzhu* was not used in the 1940s. Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:195-213) sheds light on this issue, and lists different kinds of *benzhu* in terms of their social and religious backgrounds. Xu 's accounts include their families, stories and their personalities. So it seems that the term *benzhu* was the label for various local deity cults at the time of Xu 's fieldwork, although neither Fitzgerald nor F. K. Hsu noticed and employed this term.

Most contemporary Chinese literature on *benzhu* has been heavily influenced by the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP). Chinese researchers often

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[25] See Fitzgerald (1941: 86, 87, 89, 148). For some reason, he recorded *Bezi* as Bër Dser (p. 12).

[26]To F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:197-99), what my informants described to me as a part of the *benzhu* celebration, the performance of *da ben qu* (local Bai opera), was simply a "public story-telling institution common all over China."

point out that *benzhu* cults are not clearly distinguishable from religious practices elsewhere in China, and many of them (mostly non-Bai) tend to paint an evolutionary vision, predicting that ethnic difference will disappear in the course of modernisation (e.g. Ma Yao, Yang Zhengye and Yang Xiandian)[27].

As will be discussed in the following section, there are two terms which have been used to refer to what we call *benzhu* today: *tuzhu* and *benzhu*. Both *tuzhu* and *benzhu* can be found on tombstones and monuments (Yokoyama 1992, Shi Lizhuo 1998). The Bai people abandoned the term *tuzhu* and adopted *benzhu* much earlier than the clear demarcation among ethnic groups which happened in the 1950s. Yet different people today drew a clear mark between *benzhu* and *tuzhu* in their own ways. Some villagers referred to *tuzhu* as a Yi practice while others associated it with the most ancient village temple in contrast to the newly built ones. Then what is in this name?

5.2.2 What is in a name?

The word 本主 (*benzhu*), meaning "the original lord," is a Han Chinese term, also recorded as *benzu* (Yokoyama 1992).[28] There is no Bai written word equivalent to *benzhu*. Nevertheless, the word *benzhu* was commonly used by all people in every village I visited, although different appellations for the same deities have been used by the Bai in different areas of Dali prefecture. Other terms in hybrid Bai speech

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[27] As a matter of fact, religious practices were not much investigated in Chinese ethnographic studies during the 1950s-1970s due to the ultra-leftist constraints.

[28] *Benzhu* is often translated as 'communal gods'. Yokoyama (1992) records the words according to Bai/local pronunciation as *benzu* rather than the standardised Mandarin *benzhu*.

include *laogu* (grandpa), *foyeye* or *folaoye* (grandpa Buddha). In general, every Bai village in Dali has its own *benzhu* or shares one *benzhu* with a neighbouring community. According to various sources and informants, there are, symbolically, 500 *benzhu*, or 118 *benzhu* in 72 temples in Dali prefecture, and the numerous *benzhu* temples.

Figure 1: *Benzhu* hierarchy

Central *benzhu* (Cave Village, *benzhu* capital)
↓
Nine-god temple (West Town)
↓
Eighteen-god in Dali
↓
72 deities
↓
500 deities

Source: Li Zuanxu (1991:29)

It is obvious that the term *benzhu* was not invented by the NECP as a Bai marker, although there is evidence that the term *tuzhu* was in use much earlier. Yokoyama (1992) points out that both *tuzhu* and *benzhu* are Han Chinese characters and that the latter replaced the former in labelling local religious practices. She clarifies that *tuzhu* is an older generic name which was not connected with any particular group since it was employed from a Han point of view to separate the '*wen*'(literal) self from the '*tu*' (untamed) Other. Yokoyama explains that in the late Qing (1644-1911) dynasty well-educated Bai elite changed *tuzhu* to *benzhu* to get rid

of the derogatory implication of indigeneity in the character *tu* (see Chapter Four for more). The generic name *benzhu* thus came into being in order to leave behind the '*tu*' category.[29] The point is, the term *benzhu* had no connection with any particular ethnic group when it first came into being, although it was employed to designate a difference in social status.

Shi Lizhuo paid attention to the same issue. Shi (1998:127-130) notes the change from *tuzhu* to *benzhu* in an earlier temple tablet inscribed in 1409 (p.127) in Wing Village in a *benzhu* temple. Shi points out that *benzhu* is usually found in post-Qing (1644-1911) terminology. Most importantly, Shi points out that *tuzhu* temples were common in Kunming, Dali, Tengchong and some places in Sichuan provinces. But such temples in Bai communities are all called *benzhu* temples now. Shi's findings also illustrate that the term *tuzhu* was not related to any particular ethnic group.

My own fieldwork in 2003 also provides evidence of this change from *tuzhu* to *benzhu* in Colour Village when they talked about the "oldest" temple and the two "new" *benzhu* temples. Villagers took me to the site of the "oldest" *tuzhu* temple, which was last seen during the 1980s when it was used as the village primary school. They were not clear whether there had been a change in name, but they confirmed that "the oldest temple was called *tuzhu miao*, and the new ones are called *benzhu*

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[29]Yokoyama (1992) demonstrated the change from perceptions of the imperial state (using *tuzhu*) to self perceptions (using *benzhu*). According to her, the earliest records of the term *benzhu* appeared around 1901 and 1906 inscribed on monuments. Yet in Chinese official written archives (*Dali County Gazetteer* 1916), Bai patron god temples were recorded as *tuzhu* temples. None of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) ethnographies mentioned *benzhu* at all.

miao." The only *tuzhu* temple I have visited is Nanzhao founder's ancestor temple located in a Yi community (see Ill. 57).

Some Chinese researchers analyse the change from *tuzhu* to *benzhu* from an evolutionist perspective. For instance, some maintain that *benzhu* is a shorthand for some "primitive" animist gods: 本村鬼主(also see Xu Jiarui 1979[1949]:277), 本境土主, 本境恩主, 本境福主 (Yang Zhengye 1994:2, Shi Lizhuo 1998:129) According to my experiences, these terms are still used to refer to village patron gods in Yi, Jingpo, Jinuo, Wa, Lisu and other ethnic minority communities in Yunnan. This corresponds to the views of the local people. My informants have accepted that the term *benzhu* is used to signify Bai belief, while '*tuzhu*' signifies Yi beliefs after Liberation [1949].[30]

Whether it is from the perspectives of historians, everyday villagers, or evolutionists, they all confirm a historical change from *tuzhu* to *benzhu,* and the change has ethnic implications. These two terms have been given to local deity cults among different ethnic groups in recent history. *Benzhu* is now used to designate specifically Bai religious practices and has become a term "characteristic of the Bai." The *minzu* category, *Baizu*, has facilitated this change and fixes it there. It is all about the name. The purpose of employing this term is no longer to leave the *tu* category as it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Benzhu* cults recently have become representations of a unique part of Bai tradition and an index of Bai-ness. It is the

[30]According to Prof. Lin Chaomin, *guizhu* was also a term to refer to the religious practices of the Yi before. It is related to Yi shaman and spirit worship. In the case of Yi and other ethnic minorities, the shamans were also headman. The term can be found in Chinese documentation since the Tang dynasty (personal communications in 2004.)

term *benzhu*, in contrast to *tuzhu,* that has separated Bai religious practices from similar practices among the Yi and people elsewhere in China. Hence the name/label is more important than the practices; *benzhu* cults have made a difference in constructing Bai Identity.

In what comes next, I will draw attention to three *benzhu* cults to illustrate how this change has been displayed in local temples. Considering the "polymorphism" (Freedman 1974:39) of *benzhu* cults, it is impossible to paint a complete picture of them. This section tries to cover a few *benzhu* for their relevance to ethnicity and Bai Identity.

5.3 The central *benzhu* and selected ordinary *benzhu*

This section explores Bai Identity expressed in stories of Duan Zongbang and describes negotiations of Bai Identity in the central temple (*Zhongyang Ci*). I will also discuss how the Bai explain how it is that commonly shared goddesses and ghosts can become *benzhu* in current *minzu* discourse. These *benzhu* are selected either because of their important position in the *benzhu* category, or because of their role in facilitating Bai Identity building.

5.3.1 Duan and *Zhongyang Ci* (the central temple)

When I was visiting *benzhu* temples in Dali, people kept telling me of *Zhongyang Ci,* the central temple of all *benzhu* temples, which is located in West Town. Duan Zongbang is the 'central *benzhu*' (see Ills. 26, 27 & 46) in *Zhongyang*

Ci (the central temple) because Duan helped the Nanzhao (752-902 AD) court by suppressing a rebellion and restoring the Nanzhao royal order. Some of my informants also pointed out that Duan was also the great grandfather of the first king of the Dali (938-1382) kingdom, Duan Siping, who historians have recorded as being Bai. Duan's loyalty to the Nanzhao court is thus interpreted as loyalty to the Bai.

There are many stories and anecdotes about Duan Zongbang all over Dali. The most well-known villages with Duan's image are these three: *Zhongyang Ci* in West Town, Stream village, and Horse village. There is one story about Duan in *Zhongyang Ci*, but many interrelated anecdotes about Duan in both Horse and Stream villages. This gives the impression that the Duan in *Zhongyang Ci* (see Ill. 27) might not be the same Duan as in Horse and Stream (see Ill. 26) villages.[31] However, there is one consistent theme in all the stories: Duan is the supreme god among all *benzhu*, the god of gods. I will return to stories of Duan later, now I will focus on my observations in *Zhongyang Ci.*

One day, the *lao mama hui* members in Zhou Cheng invited me to go to West Town for they were going to '*banhui*' (organise a religious activity) there the next day. We arrived about at 10:30 in the morning. In the temple, women were already there and well organised in terms of who should do what, each doing her allotted task attentively. Many middle-aged and senior women were chanting sutras in front of the main image in the hall.[32] Some middle-aged women were busy cooking;[33] and now

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[31] And the birthday of Duan in West Town is different from that in Horse and Stream villages.

[32] However, outside the temple other women were sitting in the strong Spring sun working on their tie-dye; still others were taking this chance to go to the West Town to shop for household necessities (this market in West Town has been the most important market since the Tang (618-907 AD) dynasty), or just enjoyed walking through the narrow street filled with stocks of commodities. These women

and then, they came over to serve tea to a dozen very old women (70+ in age), who could no longer chant but could contribute to this pilgrimage by physically being there.

I was puzzled by the name of the place on the door lintel: *Zhongyang Ci,* literally meaning central shrine, which all my informants told me was "the central *benzhu* temple" (see Ill. 61). In Chinese *ci* is an ancestral hall which often goes after a surname such as *zhoujia ci* (Zhou ancestral hall), *Li gongci* (Mr. Li's shrine) etc.; or is a temple for specific virtues, such as *lienü ci* (shrine for virtuous women), *jiexiao ci* (shrine for virtuous women and filial descendents).[34]

In Dali, I have been to many different ancestral temples called *ci* as well as *benzhu* "*miao*" (temples). Occasionally, I found a *ci* which was introduced to me as a *benzhu miao* (temple). I talked with many people in *Zhongyang Ci,* and in the other five different temples in West Town, and asked whether *Zhongyang Ci* was their *benzhu* temple or some family shrine. Everyone asked confirmed that *Zhongyang Ci was*, and still is the *benzhu* temple.[35] Women performing their rites and burning incense did not seem to care about what seemed very confusing to me, they simply declared: "this is our *benzhu miao*!" According to the ritual calendar inscribed on the

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portrayed a peaceful, leisurely and 'secular' country scene, which entailed anything but 'sacredness'. In spite of its formality as observed by F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]:191), people can do many profane things in a temple, for example, playing majong, which is often associated with gambling. I did not see any gambling in *zhongyang ci,* but have seen it in many other *benzhu* temples. Temples charge a small fee for those who come to gamble.

[33]As is often the case, they take turns to cook for everyone, and each old woman will act as host once a year.

[34] See also Shryock (1931:142-45).

[35] Also see F. K. Hsu (1948) and Liang Yongjia (2003).

wall in 2001, *Zhongyang Ci* celebrates three occasions: the birthday of Duan, that of Kublai Khan and that of the God of Fortune.

What is most striking about *Zhongyang Ci* is on the altar. The main hall of the temple has a giant statue in the centre of the altar (see Ill. 27), bigger than any *benzhu* statues I had previously seen in Dali. I took it for granted that the massive statue in the centre of the main hall was their *benzhu*, as in other *benzhu* temples. But I was wrong, and I found these old women were not clear who was on the shrine. What was even more striking was how these women positioned themselves when confusions about *benzhu* occurred.

The question of who the big statue was in the middle of the altar aroused a lot of controversy. Some said that it was the central *benzhu*, Duan Zongbang, "he is still in his helmet because he had just come back from the battle for some neighbouring country." This remark was similar to many recorded stories about Duan (see Xu Jiarui 1979[1949]: 210). However, some said it was Kublai Khan, which astonished a few women present as well as me. "How could he be our central *benzhu*?" one of the women present asked. How come this temple of Duan Zongbang has Kublai Khan (the first Yuan emperor) in the centre? And if this is his statue, which one is Duan Zongbang's statue? My informants from other parts of Dali who recommended that I visit this temple never mentioned to me that Kublai Khan was in the temple. And whether Kublai Khan himself ever came to Dali is still a matter of debate among historians.[36]

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[36] Although, in 1252 Mongol troops under the command of Kublai Khan conquered the Dali kingdom.

After some heated discussion, the women finally agreed that the big statue in the middle was Kublai Khan, and the small statue in local gentry's attire was Duan Zongbang who is the "host" (see Ill. 27) They assured me that there was no difference between Duan and Kublai Khan in terms of the offerings they sacrifice. I was still wondering about the relationship between Duan Zongbang and Kublai Khan, and asked who the central *benzhu* was, Duan Zongbang or Kublai Khan? There was another heated discussion.

In the beginning, they could not agree on which statue their benzhu was. Some said it was Duan, the small one; some said it was Kublai Khan, the big one. They finally agreed it was the small statue, Duan Zongbang, their "*xiao benzhu*".[37] Duan was their original *benzhu,* and when the Mongols came, their gentlemanly *benzhu* gave his seat to the guest, Kublai Khan. Once the guest sat down, he did not leave. When explaining this to me, they took me by the hand and acted out how the small statue, their small *benzhu*, was greeting and welcoming guests --- Kublai Khan and his men. "People usually offer their own seat to guests, don't they?" "Our *xiao benzhu* is hospitable and virtuous," as one of them said.

Moreover, these old women solemnly confirmed that their main purpose was to worship the small statue; "only the small one is the original *benzhu*, the big one is merely a guest." Of all the more than a dozen temples I have visited in Dali prefecture, none except this *Zhongyang Ci* had any confusion about such a host-guest relationship. Recognising Kublai Khan as a guest may be related to power

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[37]This was the same as fieldwork reports in 1958-59 and 1964 when Duan was the original *benzhu* to nearby seven villages, before Kublai Khan arrived (see BZDCHZL vol.1, p9).

relationships and territorial concerns, but here my focus is on how it is interpreted in the current discourse of *minzu.*

This interview may give the impression that it was only *my* presence and *my* questions that put the women on the spot and forced them to think of who was who. I have to admit that, in this instance, this is true to some extent. But I would still like to draw attention to the "politics of positioning" (Hall 1990:226) here. It is precisely because of their identification with Duan and *benzhu* that makes them take things for granted, to such an extent that they seemed not to care which statue was Duan, because Duan is the *zhongyang* (central) *benzhu* and this is *Zhongyang Ci.* Kublai Khan's presence could not change anything. Big and imposing as the statue is, Kublai Khan has not won the identification of those old women, who are the very persons who maintain and manage the temple. They know very well that the leading god is Duan and they came there for him.

Investigating the *benzhu* in Bai communities, I found it is actually very reasonable for my informants to identify with Duan. For one thing, the ruling class may have assigned their own ancestors to be local deities. Several people told me that Duan Zongbang was granted the title "God of Gods, or God of Five Hundred Gods," *by his great grandson* Duan Siping, founder of the Dali kingdom (938-1382) rather than by the Nanzhao court or imperial court. In Duan's case, he is eligible to be worshipped both for his contribution to the Nanzhao court and as the great grandfather of the first Dali king.

In this light, my puzzle regarding the name of the temple (*Zhongyang Ci*) was trivial. A *benzhu* temple and a lineage temple can be one and the same. According to

Li Zhengqing (1998:259),[38] Duan was worshipped as an ancestor in West Town prior to the 1950s. Duan's temple in Horse Village is named *Duan Gong ci*, which is also referred to as "our Duan *benzhu*'s temple" by the villagers. The clay image of Duan is wearing a garment with a dragon on his chest, symbolising his supreme position in *benzhu* cults.

Duan's position in West Town is well-established due to his loyalty to the Bai and the Nanzhao (752-902 AD) court. In contrast, the stories about Duan in Horse and Stream villages centre around his efficaciousness in answering prayers and bringing miraculous benefits to the worshippers/pilgrims. The point is: in West Town Duan was one of *us*. There was no story about Kublai Khan either in print or from my interviews, people simply repeated: "he is a guest, so we do not know much about him." Visually Duan is dwarfed, but he is by no means in an inferior position. The dramatically smaller statue of Duan was not because of him losing his throne. As one woman said:

> When I was young I was told that our local deity [referring to Duan] was the biggest god, all other *benzhu* in Dali were under his command. Don't judge him by his size, he is small but he is the biggest. He went to help out when Burma was in trouble.[39] Kublai Khan was a newcomer. He was added into

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[38] Li mentioned that data were based on fieldwork in the 1950s, but he did not make it clear when and who worshipped Duan as "remote" (meaning earliest in Chinese) ancestor. Yet F. K. Hsu (1971[1948]) did not mentions Duan in his discussion of ancestor festivals (183-192) and communal worship (193-199). One possible explanation is that F. K. Hsu's fieldwork was conducted during the suppression of 'superstitious' practices of the Republican era; another is that there were no Duan families in West Town (F. K. Hsu1971 [1948):124], so no one would go to worship Duan.

[39] This account coincides with what is inscribed in the temple tablet: the central *ci* was first built during the late Nanzhao period (9th century) in honour of the prime minister Duan Zongbang. When Prome (now Sri Lanka), a state established by the Prus in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, was under

> this temple later, as one of his [Duan's] modest virtues: putting guests in a prior position, [showing] his graciousness, generosity and broad-mindedness.

Similar accounts also appear in print (see Yang Zhengye 1994:36). Here Bai identity is constantly negotiated through particular social relationships displayed on the altar and among pilgrims. These old women's identification with Duan precisely illustrate that there is a clear boundary between Kublai Khan and Duan. This is not an issue about whether or not the values and beliefs favouring ruling class interests (Ahern 1981:78, 94) have permeated popular consciousness, but an issue of local identity. Confusions and misunderstandings among these women did not affect their identification of *benzhu* cults as Bai.

I did find, however, one written account of the central god temple which offers a different story. According to this account, the big statue in the middle is Duan, who is called "*da nanlaogong*" meaning "big southern grandpa", while the small statue is said to be a hero who killed a human-devouring tiger. People called the small one "*xiao nanlaogong*" meaning "small southern grandpa" (see Yang Xiandian et al. 1982). Kublai Khan is totally missing. The textual absence of Kublai Khan in this account may also be a sign of the concern with ethnic identity. It may be an attempt to expunge aspects of the story that might seem to suggest or remind of Kublai Khan's presence.

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attack it came to Nanzhao for help. For historical records about the fight between Yuan Court and the Prus between 1277 and 1288, and with the Burmese and Shan, see Su Jianling (1984). After his death, Duan was given an after-life imperial title --- central emperor or people-loving emperor, and was worshipped as the god of gods, also known as king of all five hundred kings. Three generations later, his descendant, Duan Siping, became the founder of the Dali kingdom in 937 AD.

As noted previously, Duan also has images in Horse and Stream villages. Stories about Duan are widespread in these villages, and are interrelated with the history and identity of the villages and the villagers (also see Li Zuanxu, 1991:39). The villagers know their *benzhu* so well as if he/she is one of the us-group, if not one of their family members. They know his/her personality, disposition, diet preferences, taboos, tastes and physical condition, even extra-marital affairs. One informant told me that "our *benzhu* was wounded in battle, so we are not supposed to serve him any seafood, which will lead to a flare-up of the wound." Another said "I was told the *benzhu* in Horse Village does not like red, so people avoid wearing anything red at his celebration."

The fact that Duan's image is taken to Horse Village for one month each year is explained in a story about an affair between Duan and a woman from Horse Village (see Li Zuanxu 1991:39). This story is well known and told as if the teller is talking about his/her neighbour. Senior men usually did not want to discuss it with me. They smirked and acted as if they were talking about sex in front of a woman. My senior women informants were also quite shy and ambiguous about this. During the procession to Horse Village in 2005, one woman moved closer to me, covered her mouth with her hand, lowered her voice and said euphemistically "our *benzhu loves flowers*, you know. That's why his second woman is hiding behind him rather than sitting together with him on the altar, did you notice that? She is not his wife."

Another story from both Horse and Stream villages relates well to the place and the people. According to this story, Duan possesses a magic gourd for rain-making. So when the *benzhu* from Horse Village went to Stream Village to seek rain

from Duan and did not return, the upper three sections (*deng)* of Horse villagers went to Stream Village on the fifth day of the fifth month and took Duan's image to Horse Village temple.[40] After this, villagers from Stream Village started to suffer drought and the villagers came and took Duan back on the sixth day of the sixth month to Stream Village and held his temple celebration there (see Li Zixiang 1999). The two villages are about 8 km away from each other. I participated in the procession between Stream Village and Horse Village in 2005. The procession involved many young people, who took part to "have fun" or to "get some fortune" (see Ills. 36 & 37). The older people said that they had to come and take Duan otherwise it would not rain, and it would be bad for the newly sown wet rice.

One more story told in Stream Village tells of how Duan loses his imperial title and temple to his younger brother, who got up earlier and received the imperial title as the people-loving emperor and his temple, is entitled *shendu* (the Capital of Gods which will be discussed in Chapter Six).[41] This story was told as if the old women were talking about someone in the same neighbourhood who was treated unfairly[42]

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[40]Duan always relieved the drought in Horse Village (see Yang Bin[b] 1999).

[41] The central *benzhu* temple (*Zhongyang Ci*) dismantles the monolithic centre-periphery structure in two ways. Firstly the one sitting in the central seat is not accepted as the central supreme benzhu. Secondly, having the 'god of gods' in this *Zhongyang Ci* (central temple) does not really mean this temple is the centre. The capital of gods (*shendu*) is actually located in another village (see Chapter Six for more). In both names of the temples, there is the sense of a diffused centre.

[42] Villagers in Stream village, also tells about Duan's fight against the Burmese rebellions like the old women in West Town did. And there is no anecdote or special celebration except Duan's birthday celebration in the central temple of West Town. This gave an impression that the Duan in Horse and Stream villages may not be the same as the Duan in West Town (also see the implication in Liang Yongjia (2003:150)

All these stories tell one central theme, i.e. Duan was one of us and he was able and willing to do good for his people in these villages. None of the stories about Duan actually designate Duan's ethnic background. My informants simply said that all people from Dali with the surname Duan were indigenous Bai, which is true in most circumstances. Duan's stories are more related to the place and the people. The assumption that Duan was Bai becomes evident only with the use of the *benzhu* and the official Bai label.

The image of Kublai Khan cohabiting with their "real local *benzhu*" Duan significantly illustrates ethnic difference. Instead of becoming an imposing deity, Kublai Khan's image has become a reminder of ethnic difference.

5.3.2 Lady Bejie and ghost Wu Sangui

I select Lady Bejie and Wu Sangui (1612-1678) here because of their relationship with ethnicity and with the different degrees of Bai-ness as discussed in Chapter Four. The former was a virtuous woman, while the latter was a traitor to the Ming (1368-1644) court[43] and a conqueror of Yunnan who became a ghost[44] *benzhu* among the *Leme*, one subgroup of the Bai.

Similar to Duan's story in a different way, ethnicity plays a major role in the widespread legends about, and worship of, Lady Bejie (see Ill. 28). There are several Lady Bejie temples scattered in two counties very close to the area where people

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[43] Wu was a Chinese general in the Ming dynasty. He opened the gates of the Great Wall and let the Manchu soldiers into China proper after the last Ming emperor was killed by a bandit army.

[44] For a distinction between god, ghost and ancestors, see Harrell (1974) and A. Wolf (1974b, 1974c). For an elaboration of ghosts in popular Chinese religion, see Weller (1987: 60-124).

often say that the 'authentic' Bai can be found: Phoenix County[45] and Fountain County. I visited one Lady Bejie temple in each of these two counties. The temple in the latter temple is located at the historical home of the Nanzhao founder, according to Mr. Hong, who works in the local Heritage and Relics Department. In this particular temple, pilgrims are both Yi and Bai. The ethnicity of this lady is not certain. In *The Legends of Bai Benzhu*, she was from Wing Village (Yang Zhengye 1999:113-118). Her stories on the temple tablet inscriptions or told by pilgrims were similar, they share the same theme as many legends, at least, among the Dai and the Yi. They all identify her as one of the 'us' group.[46]

Again the name of the heroine and of the temple is confusing. Firstly, the name of the Bejie temple is written with at least four different homonymous characters in literature and in temple tablets. Such confusion about the name indicates the complexity of the temple's origin and understanding. The first character '*be*,' a local pronunciation for '*bai,*' can be written with different characters, including the Bai in *Baizu*. This identification with the Bai can be observed by the listing of Lady Bejie in the *benzhu* category, which makes her assumed Bai ethnicity self-evident.

Wu Sangui is a negative historical figure in Chinese history, but he is known and worshipped as a ghost among the Bai, including some *Leme*, a subgroup of the Bai, communities in Nujiang prefecture. Ghost Wu is propitiated not because of his contributions to the people, but to prevent the ghost returning and biting community

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[45] According to Yang Xiandian *et al* (1982), there are an estimated 22 Lady *Bejie* temples in Phoenix County alone.

[46] Similar stories about a goddess recruited into the pantheon of spirits in Vietnam as the lady of the realm are recorded and analysed by P. Taylor (2002).

members.[47] Negative as it is, the Wu cult was commonly cited by my informants in Dali valley as an example of a "primitive" religious practice among the 'authentic' Bai. For those who practice the ghost Wu cult, it could well be a source of collective identity rather than a theme of individualism and greed, as Weller (1994) characterises ghost cults.

The point is, ghost cults are part of *benzhu* cults. Whoever the ghost is, the fact that this particular ghost is *benzhu* is more important. *Benzhu* have become a super-category that determines what is acceptable in terms of religious practices. The 'unorthodox' practice in *benzhu* cults may indicate 'authenticity.'

The ghost Wu cult is interpreted differently by Zhan Chengxu, a Bai researcher, and Qiu Pu, a non-Bai. Zhan Chengxu (1990) maintains that "the *Leme* do not believe in *benzhu* but practice ghost cults" (p.41) (see also Zhang Xu 1991). In Zhan's mind, ghost cults are not *benzhu* cults, as is shown elsewhere when he argues that *benzhu* cults should be listed as a "*minzu* religion" because they differ from superstitious practices. Yet Qiu Pu (1988) argues that the *Leme* practice *benzhu* cults; they worship a ghost as their *benzhu*. Different perceptions towards Wu between these two researchers may come from their different backgrounds. None of them mention that the Han religious practices include such sort of cults.

While Duan's temples and stories imply that *benzhu* cults can be both territorial and ancestral, this is not the case with Lady Bejie cults and the ghost Wu

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[47] For study of ghost cults in Chinese religious practice, see Weller 1994. My informants kept reminding me that *shern* (in Bai pronunciation of *shen*) must be propitiated (*jing*) in contrast to *fo* who are honoured (*bai*) (also see A. Wolf 1974b). These two categories differ from ghosts and ancestors, but in benzhu temples, ghosts (Wu Sangui) and ancestors (e.g. Duan Zongbang) are treated as one of the *shern* category.

cult. There is, however, one thing that relates all these *benzhu* together, regardless of what kind of *benzhu* they are, and that is ethnicity and *minzu* identity.

5.4 Non-benzhu cults

Despite the close connection between *benzhu* cults and notions of Bai identity, non-*benzhu* cults have also played a role in Bai identity building (see Ills. 30-33). To understand this requires us to put *benzhu* cults into a religious context at the local and national levels.

Non-*benzhu* cults are as common as *benzhu* cults in Dali and are more related to external religions and the state. Non-*benzhu* cults are also referred to as a Bai characteristic. This section looks into two types of non-*benzhu* temples. One is the cult of San-*Jiao-Gong* (three-gods-on-one-altar), which is not hierarchical or territorial. Chenghuang temples and *benzhu* temples are hierarchical and territorial. Hybridity is a characteristic of Bai religious practices as it is part of their identity. I argue that these two kinds of temple have become characteristically Bai or an index of Bai features because of *benzhu* cults. It is the *benzhu* in the Chenghuang temple in Fountain County that differentiates it as from orthodox Chenghuang temples elsewhere. And *San-Jiao-Gong* (three-gods-on-one-altar) is claimed unique as Bai in the way that it houses three gods from three different religious backgrounds.

5.4.1 *San-Jiao-Gong*

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, *benzhu* cults include Daoist, Buddhist or Confucian practices. Some temples were named *San-Jiao-Gong*, meaning three religions under one roof. People often told me that gods from the three Chinese religious traditions are not only housed under one roof but also on one altar, and that this can only be found among Bai communities (see Ills. 30 & 31). There is one *San-Jiao-Gong* in West Town and one in Wing Village, the latter being about 60km away from the centre of Dali.

These two temples not only share the same name, *San Jiao Gong*, but also share the same altar layout, with Laozi, Confucius and Buddha images on the same altar. The God of Fortune (Ill. 22) and the Son-giving Goddess (Ill. 25) also have their places in these temples as in most *benzhu* temples. There are no *benzhu* images in these *San-Jiao-Gong* temples, or any stories about them except some accounts of when and who started to build the temple.

The *San-Jiao-Gong* temple is only one of the temples in each of these two locations, so they do not have to be part of the route on a pilgrimage. Decisions about whether to visit them or not are often affected by available time and resources, as well as the perceived efficacy of the deities. So it might not be so important in the social life of the Bai as those *benzhu* temples. What makes it important is the fact that *San-Jiao-Gong* temples are only found among the Bai and are reckoned as one of the characteristic features of the Bai.

In a way, *San-Jiao-Gong* illustrates the response of the Bai to Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. They have localised these three religions and identified with the hybridity as their own. They worship the three gods in the same way as they

worship their *benzhu*. *San-Jiao-Gong* temples are a Bai way of accepting external religious practices. The *San-Jiao-Gong* temples display the most characteristic feature of the *benzhu* cults: they are hybrid and embracing.

If we look into the meanings and interpretations that they endorse, we find that people may worship the same god with the 'same' ritual yet find quite different meanings for it (A.P. Cohen 1985:55, also see J. Watson 1995 on orthopraxy). People do not really allocate specific tasks to the three gods. "They [the three gods] care for everyone and everything," I was told by one informant. On further investigation, I found my informants had their own understandings and expectations of the three gods. Laozi takes care of one's health and longevity; Confucius, of education and promotion in bureaucracy; Buddha, of general well-being in this life and possibly after this life. My informants said they like this temple because it is so inclusive, "it has every god." But according to my observations, it was more like a meeting place for one of the *lao mama hui* in these villages. Another temple that shares the same characteristic is Chenghuang in Fountain village.

5.4.2 Chenghuang (City God) temples

Benzhu cults are characterized by a hierarchical solidarity in which different deities are subordinate to the central *benzhu*, Duan Zongbang. Chenghuang temples are obviously related to the imperial standardisation of religious practices which occurred during the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty. Chenghuang, representing the

bureaucratic powers of the magistrate and the state in the supernatural world,[48] are very popular among the Bai.

When we look into the relationship between *benzhu* cults and Bai identity, it is important also to examine the relationship between *benzhu* and Chenghuang. Their relationship in local religious practices can reveal negotiation between the state and civil society. The difference between the gods housed in two Chenghuang temples can illustrate the different meanings encoded. I will talk about one Chenghuang temple in the ancient town of Dali and one in Fountain County.

The Chenghuang temple in the ancient town of Dali is about 9 kilometres away from the temple of the central *benzhu* (*Zhongyang Ci).* One old woman in the temple explained the relationship between Chenghuang and Duan Zongbang to me in a simile:

> Chenghuang is like a *xianzhang* (the magistrate of the county); *benzhu* is like a *duizhang* (leader of a village production team). Of course, Chenghuang is much bigger; he is in control of all the officials in this world and underworld of Dali prefecture. Duan, the central *benzhu*, is only in command of all the *benzhu* in Dali. *Benzhu* are not supposed to be here in Chenghuang temple, it is not for them, we have a *benzhu* temple in the east not far away, just a few minute walk away from here.

The relationship is not only hierarchical but also structured in two different systems: one is the official bureaucracy, representing the state; the other is vernacular, representing the local identity (see Feuchtwang 1977). The reason that *benzhu* are not supposed to be housed in a Chenghuang temple might be related to different levels of

[48] Also see Siu (1989: 57), but c.f. Feuchtwang (1977).

hierarchical status. But if the local people have to put the two systems together, how they fit into one another is crucial.

In the Chenghuang Temple of Fountain County (see Ill. 32), I found that the village *benzhu* altar was situated in a subordinate position to the imperial court. While this seems reasonable, it still requires breaking the conventions exemplified previously. In this Chenghuang temple, the *benzhu* has a separate shrine. This arrangement distinguishes this particular Chenghuang temple from orthodox Chenghuang temples and adds Bai features to it.

Lao mama hui members in Fountain County explained to me that co-housing the two was necessary because when they first reclaimed the site for this temple, there was nowhere to build except this site, the original site of the village *benzhu* temple. So they decided to put the Chenghuang in the main hall and the *benzhu* in another room by the side. The women explained that they host different gods in the Chenghuang temple because they allocate different roles for them. They said that the Chenghuang is a *yang* Chenghuang, who is in charge of the bureaucratic world in this life. They therefore needed some deity who could take care of the *yin* (after-life) world. So they decided to build another shrine for some Buddhist gods for this purpose. And the *benzhu* should be attended to. They eventually put the Chenghuang in the main hall, Confucius in the next room, and *benzhu* in the next. The God of Fortune has his altar in a separate room as in all other *benzhu* temples.

Those in Dali Chenghuang temple criticised the situation as "unorthodox". But this shows us that there is a place for *benzhu* in the national religious hierarchy. The Chenghuang temple in Fountain County does accommodate the *benzhu* properly,

and their arrangement seems acceptable to the local people and the Chenghuang. Even if the *benzhu* is a variant, the presence of the *benzhu* thus makes the orthodox Chenghuang temple "unorthodox" in the sense that it houses *benzhu* there, which, as we have seen, is now becoming a characteristic of the Bai. Having *benzhu* in a Chenghuang temple can be seen as a conscious construction of who the people are. It *is*, as A.P. Cohen (1986:4) states, a matter of claim. *Benzhu* is the symbol through which the Bai preserve a sense of a distinct community, or a sense of collective self.

Benzhu cults relate to ethnicity and ethnic identity in a larger and hierarchical social context. The Bai, the place (Dali), and tradition (local history) fit well into each other in *benzhu* cults, and this *benzhu* fits well into the Chenghuang temple and thus the state system. Anecdotes and stories about local deities have contextualised Bai identity in a historical setting.

5.5 *Benzhu Jiao* (religion)?

Minzu discourse gives a permanent expression to Bai identities in the new socio-political context and has fixed the meanings of *benzhu,* historically-existing local deity cults, as Bai "collective habits" (Durkheim 1950[1895]:7), differentiating the Bai from the Yi, Lisu and other ethnic minorities. The demarcation of the Bai category in the 1950s has facilitated the move from *tuzhu* (ethnic minority but not exclusively Bai) to *benzhu* (Bai symbol). In addition, recent discourse about developing *minzu* culture provides a "political umbrella" (Siu 1989:298) for *benzhu*

cults to avoid state intervention. Some Bai people are now beginning to call *benzhu* cults "*benzhu jiao* (*benzhu* religion) (e.g. Zhan Chengxu 1990).

Can it be said that there is a *benzhu* religion as a well established Bai scholar Zhan Chengxu proposes (1982), when the practices and even the gods worshipped are the same as local deity practices elsewhere in China? Many researchers have worked on this question by sorting *benzhu* into different categories (e.g. Xu Jiarui 1979[1949]:278-79, Li Zuanxu 1991:26-48). Such research definitely helps us to understand who the *benzhu* are, but it is more worthwhile to look into what statements of identity are manifested in this proposal to call *benzhu* cults a religion. In this light, my answer is, it is quite possible. It is all a matter of naming/labelling. Just as the NECP labelled all the different peoples in China as *minzu*, *benzhu* has done the same to local religious practices. The term *benzhu* becomes an encompassing, authoritative and symbolic vessel into which people can fit their old deities and add new ones.

It is possible to think of these benzhu practices as forming a distinctive religious tradition because of the strength of agency and subjectivity among the Bai. *Benzhu* cults are all about dealing with a new socio-economic structure. As among the Yi (see Harrell 1995a), the Bai are constructing their identity, rather than "rely[ing] on official interpretations to justify a separate 'cultural' existence" as some researchers have observed (D. Wu 1990:11). People make use of state categories and fill in their own customs. The worship of *benzhu* has taken up a leading role especially after the promotion of *benzhu* as one of the characteristics of the Bai. Therefore, a distinction of local religious practices is now in *minzu* discourse. As one

of my informants proclaimed to me: "We know who's who. The Yi have got their *tuzhu*; for the Han, their ancestors; for the Hui, their Allah. *Benzhu* cults are Bai [practices]." Yet as demonstrated in this chapter, *benzhu* cults actually cover all sorts of deities. In this regard, *benzhu* worship has become one of the Bai people's "reflexive activities" (Giddens 1991:52), in the sense that after the official category and demarcation of the Bai group were in place, the Bai make use of the category and pin down their desired term *benzhu* to differentiate themselves. This was not achieved before the 1950s.

The construction of a Bai religion and the subjectivity of the Bai have been attained in the passing on of *benzhu* stories.[49] I have read and heard numerous stories about the local deities, their origins, family histories, achievements, kinship relations and extra-marital affairs. Sometimes, narratives about different gods are similar; sometimes one specific story has different versions. The point is that all these stories are now labelled Bai *benzhu* stories. These stories are the 'webs of meaning' that my research subjects have employed to construct a Bai Identity.

The Bai-ness of religion lies in the meanings passed on through *benzhu* stories, in which place always suggests ethnicity. The implication of place and its relation with Bai Identity will be elaborated more in the following chapters. Now it is important to point out that, as shown in other chapters, in the eyes of one of my informants, "Dali and Erhai have been inhabited by the Bai and their ancestors since ancient time. Han immigration is quite recent in history."

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[49] Numberous publications also dedicate to reproduce *benzhu* stories by Bai researchers (e. g. Li Xinghua 1956, Li Yifu 1958, BZMJGSJ 1962, Yang Zhengye 1999).

The surname Duan is taken for granted as belonging to the Bai. Both in print and from my interviews I found a lot of stories about Duan Siping (the great grandson of Duan), the founder of the Dali kingdom. Most such stories tell about his birth, early childhood, hardship and his virgin mother. All the stories are contextualized around Colour and Splendour villages and function to localise him in place. This is despite the fact that the Duan clan originally came from what is known as Gansu province, according to the well-cited ethnography by Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]:319), or Yiliang according to oral tradition (see Yang Zhengye 1999:69). So the neglect of Duan Zongbang's roots is not a slip of mind or study, it is part of the politics of ignoring and forgetting in the process of making use of a state-authorized classification and exploiting the *minzu* label. Situating Duan in Colour and Splendour villages, the place and the ethnicity associated with places, thus means that "Duan is not only the *benzhu* of these two villages, but the *benzhu* of all Bai people" as in oral tradition (Yang Zhengye 1999:75).

5.6 Conclusion

Considering the birth of the term *benzhu* and how it has become an important index of Bai ethnicity, we can predict that it is quite likely for later generations to term *benzhu* cults *benzhu* religion. The conflicting and confusing knowledge of *benzhu* must be understood in a national context. Instead of incorporating people from diverse backgrounds to profess an allegiance to an imperial goddess or god as in Watson's case (1985) and C.K.Yang's case (1961), *benzhu* cults incorporate villages

and households within their realm, demonstrating not only what Freedman (1974) calls "a large measure of agreement on religious assumptions among all its people," but also a shared Bai Identity.

Benzhu cults keep hammering ethnic identity into the local social consciousness. *Benzhu* cults are mechanisms which the senior Bai women I met handle comfortably. Visits from one temple to another, from one religious occasion to another, have become part of Bai Identity. Amazingly, Bai identity largely rests in the knowledge produced by those old women who take care of and visit temples regularly. The voiceless, the 'muted' people, "the most sub of the subaltern" (Blum 2002) have a lot to say, and this chapter provides a forum for them.[50]

What is equally important is that *benzhu* cults are an open and loose structure compared with the three major world religions (i.e. Christianity, Buddhism and Islam). Any local deity and his/her deeds may have different versions that are open to a different "orthopraxis," in James Watson's (1988) terms. The syncretic nature is advocated as one of the Bai cultural traits and as demonstrating the strength of Bai culture – *jian shou bing xu* (embracing and open)[51]. Most importantly, such openness is not only found in religious practices, but also in Bai identity. *Benzhu* cults provide both a context and a medium to express Bai identity, which has been

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[50]Such knowledge is also well applauded by locals. This question can be explored through the 'genealogy' of knowledge production, the power of knowledge or, more directly, gendered power relations.

[51] Again this is not unique to *benzhu* cults; hybridity is common in Chinese religion (see C.K.Yang 1961: 81 for an interpretation of its functional significance). It is worthwhile to note here that while hhybridity and interstitiality are often examined among people living on cultural and national borders, for refugees and displaced peoples, for migrants (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), people living in a more historical and non-border regions are rarely considered in this way.

affecting the way the people look at themselves. Differences are obvious in *benzhu* cults, but minimised if not diminished when listed within the Bai category.

Bai Identity has developed a reality of its own through the use of some objective features and criteria. As Deglopper (1974) observes, rather than using their processions to say "our group is different from your group, they seem to be saying "our group is similar to yours, but we are still distinct because we are the ones who did this here." This is made possible with the *benzhu* label and *Baizu* category.

Chapter Six

Negotiating Interpretations and Identity-Making Practices

Ill. 41: "The Grand *Gua sa na* of the Bai". Cave Village. 2005.

Ill. 42: *Gua sa na*: The Sacred Temple. Cave Village. 2005.

Ill. 43: *Gua sa na*: Praying. Cave Village. 2005.

Ill. 44: *Gua sa na*: Voluntary dancing. Creek Village. 2005.

Ill. 45: *Gua sa na*: Audience of one dialogical singing site. Creek Village. 2005.

Chapter Six

Negotiating Interpretations and Identity-Making Practices

The previous chapters discussed Bai identity through the medium of Bai studies, recent memories and religious practices. This chapter explores some of the connections between legends, pilgrimage, state and locality as exhibited in the festival of *gua sa na*. This chapter will explore how and why this particular festival is projected in current media and its textual history. I will also present the self-consciousness exhibited through legends connected with the event and describe the event in 2005. Then I will discuss local government's efforts to appropriate the festival. Finally, I will rethink the meanings and implications of this event. I argue that the meanings of *gua sa na* are often uncertain and contested, it has been a means of maintaining relationships with both local deities (*benzhu*) and the state. And although the nature of this festival is regional rather than Bai, it is used as an expression of Bai identities.

Gua sa na is a three-day event (from 23rd to 25th of the fourth lunar month) celebrated in three sites (Cave, Creek and Horse villages). Participants, who come from all over the prefecture, are mostly Bai people, but non-Bai locals also take part. *Gua sa na* is one of the highlights in the local annual calendar when Bai identity is articulated, performed and reproduced; it is therefore a significant setting in which to examine Bai Identity for three reasons. Firstly, *gua sa na* is known as one of the pivotal events in the life of the local Bai population. Secondly, it has become a site to

articulate Bai Identity, as the sense of the Bai as an ethnic group has grown since 1956 (as discussed in Chapter One). Thirdly, local government officials (most of whom are Bai elite) treat the event as a part of "their" Bai heritage.[1] *Gua sa na* is one of the overlapping and interlocking arenas where the goals of the state, local government and individuals have interpenetrated and become interdependent.

As will be elaborated in this chapter, the meaning of *gua sa na* is ambiguous and the event means different things to different people. Nevertheless, it has been generally described as "the most characteristic Bai event apart from *benzhu* cults" (Yang Kun 1957:4), "the authentic (*yuanzhi yuanwei de*) Bai festival" and "one of the most important roots of Bai culture" (Yang Zhengye 2000/2:64-65).

The itinerary and the duration of the festival are described differently in various contemporary accounts,[2] but they all emphasise that *gua sa na* is an unique Bai carnival,[3] and suggest that sexual licence is one of its features. Some reports also mention that people love to perform *da ben qu*, a local Bai opera style mentioned in Chapter Three (3.4) at this particular event.

> During the event, dialogical singing between men and women regardless of age and marital status [implying courting and wooing] lasted until morning in the past [which often means before 1949]; young people slept in the woods at night [indicating the semiotics of sexual licence]. Relationships established at this event can be long-term or temporary, based on mutual attraction.[4]

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[1] This symbolically excludes other peoples in the same area.

[2] See Appendix 4 for a list of such accounts.

3 See also Fitzgerald (1941:122) who uses exactly the same term 'carnival' to describe this event. But the Chinese word for 'carnival' is charged with an anti-conventional sexual license overtone.

[4] My translation of part of such websites as http://www.dalitour.gov.cn/gs-jr-raosaling.htm, and http://www.yunnan-tour.cn/dali/renwen.htm.

From an evolutionist perspective, the current-day media project *gua sa na* as an exotic image of a so-called remnant of 'primitive' group marriage (Yang Xiandian 1991) and as a coherent and unified symbol of Bai ethnicity by drawing on contemporary literature and documents from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties to demonstrate its long history and authenticity. Food offereing rituals, which also mark the occasion, are not mentioned at all.[5]

The complex implications of *gua sa na* call for scrutiny both from historical and contemporary perspectives. Ever since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) when *gua sa na* was first recorded, most of the state discourse about it has been highly ethnocentric. As will be discussed below, recent local ethnographers have strived to make *gua sa na* a distinctive marker of Bai Identity. And local government scholar-officers have tried to advertise the local socio-cultural landscape by making this event into a globally recognised symbol of Bai identity. To *gua-sa-na* goers, the event is not necessarily exclusive to the Bai; it has been a traditional regional festival. Yet historical documents and the media have projected *gua sa na* as Bai. Early Western anthropologists either regarded *gua sa na* as a festival "in no way connected with any rite known to Chinese religious custom" (Fitzgerald 1941:121), or totally missed it.[6]

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[5] Probably because these rituals are not distinguishable from rituals in other parts of China.

6 Looking into family life in a local village, F. K. Hsu offers a meticulous description of local ancestor worship and family structure but has no account of *gua sa na.* One possible explanation is that Hsu's fieldwork was conducted during the suppression in 'superstitious' practices of the Republican era; another is that there were no Duan families in West Town (Hsu1971 [1948):124], so no one would go to worship Duan. But this explanation is not convincing because *gua sa na* is not for a particular lineage. And according to Li Zhengqing (1998:259), Duan was actually worshipped as an ancestor in West Town in the 1940s (see Chapter Five 5.3.1). As a matter of fact, Cave Village (the centre of *gua sa na)* was under the administration of West Town for a long time in local history. It is possible that the Japanese bombing might have stopped the event. During the 2005 *gua sa na* in West Town, the

Locating the event 'in history' (E. Wolf 1982), this chapter first explores the meanings and practice of *gua sa na* by examining historical and contemporary literature, legendary themes associated with it, and fieldwork data. Despite the controversial questions of sexual licence and animist worship associated with the occasion frowned on by mainstream ideologies,[7] *gua sa na* has survived by incorporating state hierarchical structures and symbols in the legends which support it and in practice. These legendary themes reveal a shift from supposedly totemic practices to deity cults, successfully transplanting and properly localising the idea of hierarchical order.[8] The name of the temple, *shendu*, or Sacred Capital (see Ill. 42), and the imperial title of "Loving-the-People Emperor" given to the deity in this temple exemplify a dynamic relationship between the state and locality. On the one hand, "its own reified presence and corporate action" (Sahlins 2004:159) has evoked the collective consciousness of what can be claimed to be Bai and havs gained acceptance from the state. On the other hand, the moderated state symbols represented in the festival have successfully taken root in local minds. A historical regulation of belief may have come from the ebb and flow of images and practices

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township organised an open concert featuring invited bands and performers. The township arranged the concert as a celebration of Bai traditional festival (see the announcement in Appendix 5). My interviewees also repeated the same lines, adding 'our' before 'Bai'. Otherwise the concert was no different from other national occasions. This is also a good example of the limits of a single village study *and* multi-sited study. The former approach may completely miss the event, while it is quite difficult for the latter to provide an in-depth ethnography in a village with more than 2000 households.

[7] Hostility towards *gua sa na* was due to its lewd implications "which is certainly not very conspicuous, but the Chinese declare that formerly it was accompanied by indecent behaviour and sexual license." (Fitzgerald 1941:129)

[8]This may represent the incorporation of a literate tradition into a proto-literate culture, which is interpreted as "the triumph of the literate and the professional" (Faure 1986:141-148).

between the state and the society.

Then, this chapter explores how *gua sa na* has become an articulation of internalised Bai identity, and the identity politics displayed by both *gua sa na* participants and non-participants. I will illustrate the complex configuration of this 'Bai' symbol over time and its significance in the regional and national socio-political framework of China.

In contemporary Chinese literature, they always link this event with some implications of sexual licence in one way or another. In my view, some sexual activity may have taken place but imperial writers only refer to it obliquely because of the strong disapproval of this kind of sex since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Whereas now in tourism, historical texts are important references often quoted by modern media, they exaggerate the sexual implications and romantic potential of this event. Next, I will introduce how *gua sa na* has been documented, contested and promoted in contemporary literature and relevant historical texts.

6.1 *Gua Sa Na* in literature

Given the fact that all available literature on this is written in Chinese, I will start with the ambiguity in the meaning of the term, *gua sa na,* which is reflected in the characters chosen to write it in Chinese. Then I will demonstrate how two contemporary Bai researchers use the same Chinese term but offer quite different explanations of the event it refers to. I will also show that historical documents and earlier texts have had a huge impact on the interpretations, reproductions and

understandings of *gua sa na* of later generations. I argue that the Bai term for the event is, what Levi-Strass referring to Saussure, calls "the primary decisive principle" (Levi-Strass1985:149-50). It is the Bai term that has become the source of all discursive inventions and more importantly, the '*ethnic*' origin of the event.

6.1.1 Ambiguous interpretations in contemporary Chinese literature

Consensus cannot be reached among Bai villagers and Bai scholars regarding the meaning of *gua sa na*.[9] There is little disagreement about the first syllable, *gua*, often written as 绕or逛in Chinese, both of which mean "strolling or touring." However, there are disputes over the last two Bai syllables The three different Chinese near-homonyms are: 1) 绕山林 or绕三林"strolling among mountains and woods or strolling among three woods", 2) 绕三灵 "strolling among the three spirit centres" and 3) 绕桑林 "strolling among the mulberry woods." These three written Chinese alternatives reveal the initial choices of the original recorders, which eventually led to three different explanations of the event. All three written forms were used by Chinese scholars and in many articles about *gua sa na* published in journals in the rapidly developing intellectual domain that arose after 1980. The three temples described may vary according to the writers' levels of commitment to fieldwork and perceived "correct" itinerary.[10]

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[9]My informants state that it is not possible to find an equivalent Chinese term for the Bai term *gua sa na*, which echoes local responses in the 1930s when people claimed that the meaning of"Gwer Sa La" (see Fitzgerald 1941: 121) had been lost.

[10] My visits show that people do not limit their visits to the designated three temples or even the three villages on this occasion.

Term one, 绕山林 or 绕三林 "strolling among mountains and woods", is quite vague. It may imply any activity in the forest. However, term two, 绕三灵 "strolling among the three spirits" has religious connotations and is often related to the three village temples that people traditionally visit during *gua sa na*. Most writers adopt term two, 绕三灵 "strolling among the three spirits", and this was the term used in the recent *Application Proposal for World Heritage Listing* (APWHL) for this festival which will be discussed later.

Term three 绕/逛桑林 "strolling among the mulberry wood" is interpreted literally by most writers and related to mulberry wood cults. But this does not mean that the interpretation of the festival is understood in the same way. For example, Han Fang (1981/3 Han Fang) discusses the three Chinese translations in an article under the same title. Han argues that the mulberry cult is the real origin of the event, which she explains as "a primitive marriage custom." Han Fang supports her argument with a legendary theme she collected from a village elder in 1964, which is about a brother-sister marriage after a flood (see legendary theme two below). Han Fang also supports her argument by reporting that almost fifty couples met their spouses at the event in 1964. To underline *gua sa na*'s origin as "a primitive marriage custom" under the influence of evolutionism, Han Fang points out that people still believe that if one fails to meet his/her beloved at the event, he/she should take one piece of a mulberry leaf home and place it under his/her pillow. Then during the next year's *gua sa na*, he/she would meet his/her future spouse for sure (Han Fang 1981:95). Although Han Fang does not make it clear, her conclusion is based on the fact that in ancient China, *sang-lin* (桑林mulberry forest) was an emblematic name related to

totemic worship (Granet 1930:180), either as a ritual location or as a signifier referring to community worship. This is also noted by a local Bai scholar, Yang Zhengye in his discussion of the "*Cultural Meanings of Bai*绕三灵." Yang (1994:20-28; 2000/2:62) approaches the event from the perspective of the mulberry tree cult, but relates the event to an "ancient community cult."[11]

In both the above, the third term 绕桑林 "strolling among the mulberry woods" is understood as ritual-oriented. But it is more important to see that these two studies and two out of the three Chinese terms embody ritual implications, which are also clearly shown in most of the eight legendary themes presented later in this chapter. Moreover, Han and Yang also relate the event to spouse/romance-hunting which can not be justified by any of the three different Chinese terms.

Most of the contemporary literature explains the event with reference to spouse/romance-hunting in the same way as the popular media does. For example, Fitzgerald (1941:130)[12] described the scene of singing girls of the host village surrounding visiting young men dancers as unacceptable to the mainstream ideology. This is why Fitzgerald (1941:127) observed that certain aspects of the ceremony had disappeared in the 1930s "possibly as a result of government disapproval". However, neither my informants nor my fieldwork observations provided any evidence of

[11]Ethnographic descriptions are not available in these two studies; Han retells the story as narrated by her informants while Yang simply mentions his participation in an event in the 1980s. Both articles' lack of serious fieldwork results in their neglect of the actual performance of villagers. Most other publications list *gua sa na* under Bai culture, and simply copy one another based on textual data. A thick volume dedicated to *gua sa na* did not appear until 2005.

[12]Today, young people are simply not present due to the direct impact of recent socio-historical changes and economic development.

sexual licence[13] despite the fact that this has been hinted at in mainstream discourse for centuries. And this is not to say that there is no romance-seeking among participants. Most literate informants agreed with one man who told me: "Everyone could enjoy the freedom [referring to loving-making freely with anyone] for three days a year in ancient times!" Such statements tend to be criticised as typical Han Chinese interpretations of the exotic Other by western researchers, who accuse the Han Chinese of depicting ethnic minorities as sexually untamed so that the Han bureaucracy can confirm the Han as being more civilized and morally higher (see Diamond 1995, Tapp and D. Cohen 2003: 72). Such interpretations can be evolutionist and erotic; the inherent bias has a long history and rationale. This notion of free love has been utilised over time in different ways. It was used to describe the 'savage' stage of early human social behaviour by early Chinese literati, which may imply but not exclusively refer to , orgiastic practices. Later, this notion was often used to refer to either 'collective marriage' or simply love-making freely. It was regarded as part of a savage stage in Marxist-Morgan dogma. In the post-Mao era, it has been often used to describe traditional customs of ethnic minorities as a sign of societal 'primitiveness' or 'backwardness'. My point is, orgistic practices may or may

[13] The controversial 'sexual license' of *gua sa na* is different from that among the Sherente and Bororo tribes as described in Levi-Strauss (1963:126-27). In *gua sa na* the 'possible sexual affair' is open to married and single men and women. There is a twist here. During the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods, a nocturnal episode in the woods perhaps happened now and then, which was not necessarily related to sex. Imperial writers all tried to ignore or hide this when writing about *gua sa na*. According to my observations, the 2005 stay-over only took place in temples among old women (*lao mama hui* members) in a group. Yet the media about this festival always tries to send the message between the lines: the stay-over in woods originates from extra-marital romantic dates between opposite sexes. Besides the media, such implications are obvious in Liang Yongjia's interview with villager in West Town (2003: 170, 177, 181 & 222).

not have taken place, but the current media and written accounts (including historical documents), whether directly and indirectly, have always "latched onto the lack of a necessary connection between sex and marriage" (Tapp & D. Cohn 2003: 72; also see Granet 1930:193).

At a superficial level, the ambiguity in the meaning of *gua sa na* results from the translation from Bai to Han Chinese, but this is not merely an issue of translation and intelligibility of the Bai term. The various Chinese terms are discussed here because they reveal different interpretations of the Han Chinese toward this event and *gua sa na* goers. However, the Bai name for the event expresses its exclusive Bai-ness and serves as the starting point for all the constructions relating this festival to the Bai. To the Bai, the Chinese terms are not important. No matter whether *gua sa na* has its origins in "a primitive marriage custom" (Han 1981/3), "an ancient community cult" (YNSSMZ 1983: 66) or a spouse/romance-hunting tradition, it is, first of all, an 'authentic' Bai tradition related to the Bai people even though it obviously proceeds the modern label of *Baizu.* Han Fang's work is nevertheless important in pointing out that the legendary themes which surround the festival have been added to over time.

6.1.2 Disputes over the 'correct' *gua sa na* itinerary

Contemporary publications and the media all emphasise a certain itinerary which *gua sa na* goers follow or are supposed to follow (Yang Zhengye 2000/2). The itinerary of *gua sa na* has not only deep resonances of ethnicity but also an economic value today. In reality, however, it is impossible to set a fixed itinerary and date.

Nevertheless, the attempt to regulate and establish authority over the event is quite apparent in these publications.

In 1937, Fitzgerald observed that only one Buddhist temple was visited at *gua sa na*, indicating the *Shen Yuan Shi*. The identity of the second temple visited is also quite obscure like the first one. Some say it is Shepherd Village temple, even though there were no Bai deities in this temple when my fieldwork was undertaken. Others say it is Creek Village temple.[14] Several articles insist that people started from The Three-Pagoda, which clearly is not the case now, since The Three-Pagoda is enclosed as a fee-paying park, making it physically inaccessible to a wider local population.

The debate is not limited to literature; my own observations indicate that most people followed one of three options: Cave Village - Creek Village, or Cave Village – Sunshine Village in one day. Some of them also spent one day in Cave Village and another day in Creek Village. In addition, my interviews at various temples at this time of the year show that people had strong opinions about the 'correct' itinerary even if they did not participate in the 2005 event. Some senior informants were not happy about the media representations and pointed out the "wrong information" some media provide. They recalled that people actually used to start to gather at Dali Chenghuang temple[15] one day before the prescribed commencement of *gua sa na* in order to be well prepared. Instead of finishing the event on the 25th in Creek village, they would continue their pilgrimage to one of the village temples in Horse village. Later I found that the preparation day was left out of contemporary accounts and the *Application Proposal for World Heritage Listing* (APWHL) due to the destruction of

[14] Hur Chieh Village in Fitzgerald (1941:123)

[15] The official *Genius Loci* (see Fitzgerald 1941:123).

Dali Chenghuang temple in the 1960s.[16]

My fieldwork indicates that changes in the itinerary or temples visited are as frequent as variations in the number of days people choose to spend at this event, and that the duration of the event actually shapes how many villages and which villages people visit. The duration of the event can range from three days to five days and even three months.

> As the chairwoman of Duan's temple in Horse Village said to me:
>
> People came around those three days, it is hard to say whether they followed a certain itinerary or fixed dates, it is equally difficult to say whether they came here to end the event or not. There is no rule for that. They just came at their convenience.[17]

According to her, people started *gua sa na* from Cave village; Horse villagers usually went there once a year to make sacrifices, not to chant sutras. The interviewees I talked to in Horse Village were mostly senior men and women, and they did not give me even the slightest explicit hint about spouse/romance-hunting, but this was perhaps because they perceived it as something indecent and not to be revealed, or perhaps because they had no interest in this aspect of *gua sa na* at all. But one thing was very important to them all, the temple income from visitors during the event. They knew exactly how much their temple earned and bits and pieces about other relevant temples. Detailed income and expenditure records were posted in Sunshine Village temple (see Table 7). Considering the low income of Bai

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[16] The *Chenghuang* cult was not maintained under the republic (1911-1949) regime (Fitzgerald 1941:123). The re-construction of the temple in the 1980s did not bring *gua sa na* participants back to the temple.

[17] Personal communication in June 2005.

villagers, I was surprised by the generous cash contributions.

Published accounts of the itinerary and duration of *gua sa na* draw heavily on what is recorded in local gazetteers, travelogues and imperial history books. But less than adequate attention has been paid to the practices of *gua sa na* pilgrims at the event, or to the changes that have taken place from *gua sa na* being suppressed for centuries to being advocated as an ethnically distinctive event. The following section will highlight *gua sa na* in three historical documents in order to tap into some of the sources of current discourses. How the imperial literati perceived *gua sa na* and how *gua sa na* has been recorded in history books impact on how the media chooses to represent it today.

6.1.3 *Gua sa na* in textual history

Having encountered inconsistencies and confusions related to the Chinese translation of the Bai term, the itinerary and duration of the event, I was surprised to find a uniform hierarchical power structure and a smooth continuity of summarised accounts recorded in historical documents since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). No serious ethnographic descriptions about *gua sa na* ever appear in these texts except for a few lines or one paragraph condemning it. The earliest text that records *gua sa na*, as is the case with most textual recordings about ethnic minorities in Yunnan is from the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty. Yet in spite of their inadequacies and flaws, these texts are often cited as important references in contemporary literature (e.g. Shi Lizhuo 2000a). This section will address three texts from three historical periods: Ming (1368-1644), Qing (1644-1911) and Republican (1911-1949) that are

frequently quoted by contemporary writers.[18]

Before considering these texts, it must be pointed out that during the Yuan (1279-1368), Ming and Qing dynasties, the community worship of *Chenghuang* (the City God), the five grains and domestic animals (cattle, horses, pigs, chickens), praying for rain and ancestor-worship were highly promoted, strictly regulated and practiced all over China.[19] This suggests other religious practices, such as animist beliefs were suppressed to different degrees by the mainstream. One of the Qing dynasty ritual regulations documented in Dali local gazetteers stipulated:

> Any village with one-hundred-households must build a temple to worship the five earth elements and five grain species. Worship five earth elements five or six days after the start of spring; worship five grains five or six days after autumn starts (Ai Zixiu 1986: 161).

The impact of such state regulations can be found in most temples in the form of statues of these designated four animals. State-sanctioned history books were not supposed to record anything other than standardised practices. Nevertheless, one of the unorthodox Ming (1368-1644) histories (*yeshi*) mentioned that *gua sa na* had persisted for one thousand years, and was full of ancestor-worship, singing night and day, and sexual licence regardless of age and marital status,[20] and that indigenous

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[18]These historical documents have been treated totally differently by different writers. Some historians tend to bury themselves in such texts to squeeze evidence for a certain topic.

[19] Such regulation may appear in agricultural texts dating back to the fourteen century (see Faure 1986:141 for details), and sacrifices to city gods were established in Ming law, see Zhao Shiyu (2002:46-47) for relevant Ming statutes, also see Feuchtwang (1974, 1977) for a thorough analysis.

[20]Again these are typical erotic and ethnocentric representations of ethnic minorities among imperial literati. As Notar (1999:1) points out, even these unofficial histories were written in official language rather than in the voice of the subaltern. Here I will draw attention to the fact that this notion was

people were preoccupied with divination practice, they even believed that participating in the event would bring them children and cure them of any diseases. Such documentation indicates that this event was meant to produce more offspring, and that both sexual licence and fertility cults may have served this purpose. Contemptuous attitudes are noticeable even in such marginalised history books.

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), negative attitudes were equally observable in the work by local Bai literati, such as Yang Qiong (杨琼), in his work *Notes of Yunnan* (*dian zhong suo ji* (滇中琐记). In Yang, there was not even a hint of supposed sexual licence associated with the festival by other writers. As Yang describes in this work:

> According to local oral tradition, this event had continued since the Nanzhao period (roughly 7th AD), and all the bans have failed for about one century. It is full of superstitious activities such as praying for sons and seeking protection against disasters and misfortunes.[21]

The Republican-era (1911-1949) county gazetteer, *Dali xianzhi gao* (大理县志稿 1916), maintained the same tone. It simply recorded that "people are generally superstitious, but now this event is banned, idols have been destroyed."[22]

These historical texts portray the broad socio-political background and,

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simply picked up from earlier writings about early human social life, later reinforced under the influence of evolutionism. The ancestors referred to might be a stone, a tree or any common object, which is still common among Bai, Yi and other ethnic minorities.

[21]I am relying on the account of this in *Zhongguo Jiaoyu Bao* June 27, 2000. The term Yang Qiong used was '绕山林' (strolling among mountains and woods).

[22] Quote in *Zhongguo Difangzhi Minsu Ziliao Huibian* (vol.2) eds. Ding Shiliang et al. 1991, p.857. Beijing: Shumu Wenxian Publishing House.

between the very few lines, the contemptuous attitudes of the literate elite toward *gua sa na*.[23] However, sexual licence was never made explicit in these historical accounts. And they are actually similar accounts even though the contempoary interpretations of it are so diversified.

Firstly, like most documents in Chinese history, none of these accounts is an empirical one. It is extremely difficult and even misleading to treat Chinese historical documents as objective accounts of social practices because most writers copied their predecessors to seek legitimacy and authority for their own writings.[24] Accounts of sexual licence and the pursuit of more offspring seemed to have disappeared entirely as far as I know in Yang Qiong's account and the Republican (1911-1949) version. Yang only recorded the negative attitudes of the imperial courts toward the 'superstitious' practice involved. But we cannot assume that *gua sa na* had no sexual overtones.[25] It is quite likely that, as with most of the local scholars at that time, Yang Qiong purposefully left out what he might know very well as an insider whatever the

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[23] Such Chinese historical texts are less about ethnic minorities than about the dominant central Han Chinese views of ethnic peoples in the periphery (Diamond 1988).

[24] If there were no previous records available, the armchair imperial historian and ethnographer bureaucrats would simply write from their own judgement which was charged with strong ethnocentrism. Seen in this light, it is easier to see why Henry Rudolph Davies influenced Chinese ethnologists both in the 1920s and the 1950s (see Mullaney 2004b for detail). In addition, many western writers have encountered this frustration, see Bell (1989:n7) for examples in religious studies. In addition, all imperial writers involved here were exclusively male. Many contemporary armchair ethnographers also rely on such data. Few have come up with a convincing explanations or new insights due to inadequate fieldwork.

[25] The state (since the Ming dynasty 1368-1644) made consistent efforts to stamp out *gua sa na* as a whole, but never succeeded until the 1960s when "it was totally dead during the Cultural Revolution" as an informant told me, while others in various villages confirmed.

historical fact is.[26]

Secondly, 'superstition' (*mixin*) has never been approved in China. However, notions of what counts as 'superstition' have changed over time.[27] In Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) documents, superstition referred to any non-ancestral worship. During the Republican period (1911-1949), this notion of superstition was extended to any animist belief and unorthodox idol cults. During the Cultural Revolution(1966-1976), notions of 'superstition' referred to any religious practice as opposed to atheistic ideologies promoted by the new state, and *gua sa na* was totally outlawed as a form of 'feudal superstition.' Up to the early 1980s, defining anything as superstition made a firm distinction between the orthodox Self and the exotic Other.

Since the late 1980s, both animist and *benzhu* cults have been re-assessed

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[26]Being highly educated, Yang was not supposed to participate in *gua sa na* in common with other elites. Such deliberate lack of attention to such activity are often interpreted in the West as a manifestation of a fear of the un-repressed sexuality of ethnic minorities (see Granet 1930; Tapp and Cohn 2003:72) about the aloof attitudes of the educated.

[27]For the "Superstition Destruction Movement" in 1928-1929, clashes between traditional feudalism and nationalistic anti-traditionalism in the early 20th century, and hostility to religion during the Cultural Revolution, see Myron L. Cohen (1994) and Anagnost (1987, 1994). Anagnost (1987:42) argues that anti-superstition campaigns are not really about superstition per se but more about playing on the negative imagery of the superstition category to project other messages of concern. Duara (1995:97-110) notes that during the first few decades of the 20th century, while making a clear distinction between science and superstition, the state targeted some elements for eradication while seeking to appropriate the symbolism by superscripting their meaning in the popular tradition. Certain practices were condemned; others were to be preserved. For an elaboration of different emphasis of anti-superstition campaigns during the Republican period (1911-1949), Mao's era (1949-1976) and post-Mao era (1976-present), see Anagnost (1994). Also see Duara (1995:95-113) for campaigns against religion through 1900-1915 and 1920s – 1940s, and Feuchtwang (1989) for a range of activities regarded as being superstitious between 1962-1986.

with fresh eyes as valuable traditions and non-intangible heritage. The pejorative word 'superstition' has disappeared totally from mainstream usage. Fertility cults are no longer taken as evidence of lacking civilisation after the 1980s.[28] I draw attention here to the recent shift from the then 'superstitious' practices to what has been promoted as Bai ethnicity in the post-Mao era (post-1976), and its relevance with the changing definitions of superstition. Being religious, or even superstitious, does not mean opposition to modernity, or that society always opposes the state. Here there is a carefully maintained balance where a state of 'you in me and me in you' (Fei 1991a) has been attained simply because society wants to sustain its tradition and the state likes to maintain its authority.

Next, I will examine the main legendary themes that I abstracted from numerous sources as listed in Appendix 4.

6. 1.4 Locality and self-consciousness in legendary themes

I obtained the following eight legendary themes that explain the origins of *gua sa na* from different sources, including interviews with informants in different villages, participant observations, temple tablets, wood panels, printed publications and websites (see Appendix 4). Frequently I was surprised to find my informants telling me a story absolutely identical to one of the versions that I had read or heard about, suggesting that the story might come from the same source. I often met villagers who would repeat the same line, "I am not clear about this sort of history stuff, but there is someone who loves reading and knows everything about the history

[28] As Kammerer and Tannenbaum (2003) noticed in Southeast Asia, fertility is intertwined with political power and prosperity; fertility is never independent of polity understood in the broadest sense as the organization of individuals and families.

of our village." One woman (aged 48) told me: "They have all got it wrong, I *read it in books* when I was little,[29] it was about…." Her account turned out to be one of the many recorded versions. Some of the eight themes can also be found inscribed on temple tablets.

These accounts of *gua sa na* are presented here not only for the information they contain, but also for the internal logic and contradictions demonstrated in the way certain mythical elements are organised and integrated in them. The order of these themes has nothing to do with the dates of their composition.[30] All these origin stories only started to appear in the 1980s. For convenience of analysis, I present the legendary themes in an evolutionary contour to illustrate the development of their contents. This order is based on *my* own analytical construction and intended to bring out the internal structural coherence in the texts and the inter-relationships between them on different levels. And I have selected and summarised the stories according to consistently and frequently repeated messages, and my understandings derived from fieldwork (see Appendix 4).

Legendary theme one reveals community celebrations of a hunter-gatherer harvest.

> Long, long ago, the whole Dali valley was a sea. Water reached half-way up Cangshan Mountain. The Bai ancestors lived by hunting in the woods of the mountain. Each time they captured any animal or prey, they would sing and dance to celebrate the occasion. Gradually, people called the celebration *gua sa na*, meaning "strolling among the forests."

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[29] Cf the Hunt, Tate or Benyon peoples' practices that Levi-Strauss (1978:36) mentions.

[30] Chinese history books simply mentioned that the approximate starting date might be around the Tang Dynasty (618-907AD) because such stories had not been considered as trustworthy or worth recording earlier. No origin stories appear in Fitzgerald's (1941) ethnography.

Legendary theme two is a celebration of the mulberry as a sacred tree.

> Long, long ago, there was a flood, and water reached the top of Cangshan Mountain. That's why shells are found in the mountains whenever villagers go up there to chop firewood up today. A brother and a sister[31] survived the flood by clutching onto a mulberry tree. After the water receded, the brother and sister married each other and had hundreds of children. In order to express their gratitude toward the mulberry tree for saving their lives, their offspring started to worship the mulberry as their sacred tree. Since then, people have never chopped down the mulberry tree for firewood.[32]

These first two legendary themes celebrate the reproduction of food and human beings, and are often taken for granted and accepted unquestioningly as the earliest. They are therefore often taken as the 'authentic' accounts of the origin of *gua sa na*. The contents start to change in the next legendary theme.

Legendary theme three is a story about the search for a prince in the mulberry woods.

> When Dali was a state under the Bai king [referring to the king of the legendary *Baizi Guo*], there were three plots of beautiful mulberries. No one was admitted to these woods until one day the prince lost himself in there. The king ordered all the people to help look for the prince. People took this opportunity to sing and dance as soon as they got into the mulberry woods. That is why the celebration is called *gua sa na*, meaning "strolling among three mulberry woods."

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[31] In flood myths and brother-sister marriage myths, the incestuous sibling marriage of the only two survivors is a very common motif in the creation myth among ethnic minorities in Yunnan. For versions among the Kammu, see Lindell et al. (1988); for the version among the Hmong, see Tapp (1989); for a thorough study of flood myths, see Dundes (1988).

[32] Also see Han Fang (1981).

Legendary theme four is another story about looking for a prince.

Once there was a kind king whose son was lost. His subjects voluntarily organised themselves into groups to look for the prince. They went from one place to another. Unfortunately, all their efforts were in vain, so they kept searching year after year. That is how the custom started.

Legendary theme five is related to the rituals of praying for rain.

In ancient times, there was a continuous and severe drought in Dali. People could not plant rice at all, so they went to appeal to the dragon king for rain in Dragon village. The dragon king was very sympathetic. To seek permission from the Jade Emperor, he went to Cangshan. But before he reached the Jade Emperor, he happened to see two legendary immortals playing Chinese chess. He explained to them the situation, and the immortals provided the solution: to stir the water in Erhai lake three times. The water-craving people were so anxious that they stirred eighteen times. Thus, Dali was flooded. Knowing the disaster would bring blame on him from the Jade Emperor, the dragon king made the people stage noisy singing and dancing in the Cave Village temple. So when the Jade Emperor was about to reproach the dragon king for the flood, the latter showed the emperor how the desperate villagers were craving for rain and praying vigorously in Cave Village temple. From then on, local people conducted the same performance each year before planting rice to inform the dragon king that it was the time they needed rain.

Legendary Theme Six concerns Duan Zongbang --- the legendary ancestor of the Dali kingdom founder, Duan Siping.

Gua sa na started in honour of the Dali king [first king of the Dali kingdom], Duan Siping's ancestor Duan Zongbang who loved his subjects as his own children, so people gave him the title of "*ai min* emperor" (loving-the-people emperor). On the 23rd day of the fourth month, when he went to hold rituals

> on the mountain, he died unexpectedly. The people set up a temple (*shen yuan shi*) on the mountain and granted him the title "king of five hundred kings." That is why *shen yuan shi* is one of the three temples people must visit or commemorate on this occasion.[33]

Legendary theme seven deals with Guanyin [Avalokitesvara] and an anonymous general. The story shares some details with the personal stories of Duan Zongbang:

> After Guanyin conquered *luoca,* a local monster, Dali valley emerged. Guanyin appointed the general who helped her as "the king of five hundred kings" and "founder emperor of the state". Cave Village was made the capital. Then Guanyin granted the other generals the title of "five hundred kings" as local deities in each place. When people moved to the valley from the mountain, "the king of five hundred kings" taught them to sow, plant mulberry trees and make cloth. Since then, people have enjoyed life in the valley. In gratitude, people would visit the master king's temple in Cave Village each year before they started to plant rice.

Legendary Theme Eight has this form:

> When Duan Zongbang was an army general under the Nanzhao regime, he killed a prominent Nanzhao prime minister and put the power into the hands of the Duan lineage. Later, all the *benzhu* from the then seventy-one villages were ordered to pay annual tribute on the 25th of the fourth month to Duan Zongbang, the supreme *benzhu*.

An important figure is introduced into the third and fourth legendary themes: a local Bai king (meaning 'white king'). This motif is reinforced in legendary themes six; seven and eight in the figure of Duan Zongbang, who is believed to be the

[33] As noted previously, this is not the case any more according to my observation.

ancestor of Duan Siping, the founder of the Dali kingdom (see Chapter Five). No matter whether the local Bai king was a historical figure (Duan) or a legendary ruler ('white king'), it is important to note that he was appointed by his people (theme six) rather than by an external superior being, such as the most common sources of power and authority: the Jade emperor (theme five) or Guanyin (theme seven).[34] The fact that power is not always aligned with external sources as shown in themes three, four, six and eight, gives prominence to these legendary themes.

Like other themes, legendary theme eight is found in a number of sources. But unlike previous themes, this version is officially endorsed and carries authority. It was first published in *A Short History of Bai Literature* by a well-known Bai academic, Li Zuanxu (1984:54), and was included in the recent *Application Proposal for World Heritage Listing* (APWHL) by the local government. Moreover, *gua sa na* was mentioned explicitly as "a pilgrimage to the five-hundred kings on behalf of all the villages" (BZJZ 1961:49) in the state-sanctioned book, *A Short Ethnography of the Bai* (Baizu Jianzhi) compiled by a group of authoritive historians 40 years ago. Liu Xiaobing (1991:203) mentions vaguely that "the *benzhu* images of the seventy-one villages used to be there in front of Duan's image." None of these authors provided any sources to back up their arguments, but it is quite likely that the writers chose this theme rather than other versions because the number of villages in this version is seventy-one, which coincided with the number of Bai villages in Dali in 1944 when Xu Jiarui (1979[1949]: 277) conducted his fieldwork.[35] The number of

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[34]Some 12th century records also account that Guanyin was mobilised to empower individuals or certain lineages (see Lien Juichih 2003:103 for detail).

[35] Xu's work was the only ethnography accessible to researchers up to the 1980s, and was taken

villages is taken as testimony to the truthfulness of the eighth version, but it is more salient in endorsing the event with characteristic of Bai ethnicity. For the notion that there are seventy-two deities (including the central *benzhu*) in Dali is still very strong in local social memories and religious practices.[36]

None of the eight legendary themes gives any idea of sexual license, although this is the main message that historical researchers, in my view, have obliquely conveyed, and is exactly what current media highlights. Today, the possibility of erotic activity is at the back of many people's minds, whether or not they physically participate in the event, and thus constitutes a vast space for fantasy and desire.

From historical data to contemporary literature, interrelated themes (such as agriculture, religious practice or romance-seeking) change over time. Yet the notion of who we/they are as exhibited in all sorts of records has never changed, and it is always related to images of superstition, exoticism (directly) and eroticism (indirectly). The local settings in legendary themes five, seven and eight suggest a strong sense of locality, and eventually an ethnic one. Duan's central position and his Bai background make the Bai ethnicity salient.

The following section will describe my own experience in the 2005 *gua sa na*, before teasing out the interactions between the state, local authority and regular *gua sa na*-goers. I propose that it is in these interactions, how *gua sa na* is experienced and promoted, that Bai identities are exhibited and constructed.

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seriously as an authoritive account of the socio-historic reality in Dali before 1949.

[36] See Chapter Five (5.3). Legendary themes six to eight can also be found, in one way or another, among informants in relevant temples.

6.2 Being Bai at the 2005 event

This section presents how different social actors (mostly within the Bai category) perceived or engaged the event. From the first day of the event which was 30 May in 2005, in line with the most ritual calendars. I followed *gua sa na* goers from village to village and visited temples that were mentioned in ethnographies or interviews. Most of my interviewees were middle-aged and senior *gua sa na* goers, and village stall-keepers and seniors in nearby villages who had participated in *gua sa na* in the past. I will start with how I became involved in the event from the first day, then I will account for my observations in three of the most-visited villages. Given the multiple activities happening simultaneously, this description inevitably cannot be comprehensive, yet still it can be of some significance to envisage what *gua sa na* means to ordinary *gua sa na* goers.

Before I participated in the 2005 *gua sa na*, I had asked a number of villagers in different localities whether they took part in the event. Their answers varied according to their age and gender. Most young people knew about it, but had not been involved.[37] Senior men usually talked about it contemptuously. One man (aged 62) explained: "In Bai, '*sa*' means 'between each other' and '*na*' means 'freedom or freely'. Thus it was a '*fenliu hui*' (casual eroticism) from the very beginning". Another explanation reinforces the idea of random eroticism. According to Mr. Yang

[37]I only met old or middle aged individuals at the event in 2005. This is not to say that the participation of young people has been successfully banned, but is due to the fact that most young people in villages have left to seek work opportunities or pursue their studies in urban areas. This younger generation have therefore simply never had a chance to pick up all the skills, especially the instant-composition skills basic to dialogical singing.

(aged 58), "*gua*" means "looking for", "*sa*" means "be in love", "*na*" is a term for "unmarried girls" and is also a euphemistic pronoun for "love". One educated 60-year-old male stated that the Bai term "*sa na*" in 'ancient' Bai language refers to the lovers' house [38] where young people meet in groups and arrange individual assignations with the opposite sex (also see Yang Zhengye 2000:61). Other informants offered various explanations which can be traced back to the three Chinese written forms for the event. However, when I interviewed senior women, they all simply replied that "we go to chant sutra," "to burn incense" and "to seek a smooth life". As I will show, attitudes towards *gua sa na* among regular *gua sa na*-goers vary tremendously and can be totally different from the implications endorsed in Chinese terms, stories, research findings, the understandings of those who do not participate, and the memories of former *gua sa na*-goers. Equally important are the views of those who do not go but have made great endeavours to produce *meanings*, which often echo mainstream imaginations.

6.2.1 Heading for the Sacred Capital (*shendu*)

Early in the morning of 30th May 2005, I arrived in the new town of Dali, which is about 17 kilometres away from Cave Village where the event is traditionally located and people start their pilgrimage. Getting on a bus, I found myself among two groups of senior locals bound for the same destination. These people were mostly

[38] Again lovers' houses in ethnic minority villages have inspired many imaginations. According to my fieldwork in various parts of Yunnan, a lovers' house was a common public meeting house for teenagers prior to the 1950s. According to my interviews with different senior individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, there was no sex.

women. One group was urban, the other rural. When they learned that I was going to the same event, they were amazed at the fact that I, a Kunmingese, could know the exact dates of this festival. The bus driver and other local urban passengers were not so clear about the date due to the difference between the Chinese lunar calendar and the Gregorian calendar. The old women offered to show me the way because we had to take another bus to the nearest road, and the village was about four kilometres away from the road.

The urban group were a couple and one woman who came to this event together every year 'for fun' and 'to sing', as they said. The rural group were from the same village in the south, and most of them did not speak the local Han dialect. They were wearing identical Bai clothes because each of them had 'one set of nice clothes for special occasions'. One of the urban women (aged 73) started to sing a narrative tune a few minutes after she was seated. During the half an hour bus ride, the two urban women sang more songs, some of which were Yunnan opera rather than Bai tunes. The singing drew much attention from the passengers in the bus, but not from the rural women in the same bus, who could not understand much of the local Yunnan lyrics, which was different from Bai tunes. Yet both groups confirmed to me that "there are no rules [regarding singing], any song is OK." This remark described the case in the 2005 event. I saw people singing popular songs, but I did not see anyone performing Bai opera as often cited in the media and printed sources, although there was a stall selling Bai opera CDs.

After half an hour on the second bus, I got off by the side of the highway where several policemen were directing the congested traffic. The only way leading

up to the village had already been lined with breakfast stalls, incense peddlers and various other stalls for about three kilometres. Most dealers came from Cave Village, where the majority had their daily business stalls in the village market, and set up stalls here to grab some extra business. They told me they would move to Creek Village in the afternoon because that was where most visitors would go. This is not to say that no one would visit Cave Village temple later that afternoon, but the number of visitors would drop dramatically. The village proper was also clogged with booths, selling everything from food to daily necessities.

6.2.2 Site one: Cave Village temple, the Sacred Capital

30th May 2005 was the first day of the event (see Ill. 41). Cave Village was filled with people; the temple, the open ground outside the temple and the market were all full of visitors from near and far. In the temple, "*hu fa shen gong*" (sacred guarding temple), pilgrims and the tablet inscribed with the story of the temple provided similar accounts as legendary theme seven. The main *benzhu* in this temple was once a local general who helped found the regional state (*jian guo*). He loved his people, and this virtue is markedly acknowledged in wood-panels and couplets inscribed on wooden columns.

All the space within the temple walls was occupied by numerous senior women's prayer groups and families who had arrived earlier --- either the day before or early that morning. They had enclosed their territory with stones or personal belongings such as water jars, mattresses or back-baskets. They set up a temporary offering altar in the middle or the front part of their enclosures, and started sutra-

chanting (see Ill. 43). Those groups who had arrived the night before spent the "mysterious overnight sleep" much discussed by the media there. They told me they enjoyed each other's company and relaxing chats that night.

Around 10:30 in the morning, some women were chanting sutra in their own enclaves; some started to cook for their groups. Raw and cooked food was offered in front of their temporary altars in turn. The same sacrifice was performed before the formal altar in the main hall of the temple. Besides sutra-chanting and food offerings to the local deities on the altar, another important activity was to burn pink incense (to deities and spirits), yellow paper-boxes (to underworld officials)[39] and paper money (for their deceased relatives). So *gua sa na* was also an occasion to honour dead relatives and the underworld officials. These last two sacrifices were critical to those who came in a family or lineage group. There was a small mound of burning pink and yellow paper offerings in front of the main hall (see Ill. 68), adding more burning heat to an already scorching summer day. To prevent the burning pile from getting out of control, a man was holding a hose to curb the flames. But this did not deter newly arrived people from fuelling the fire with more bunches of incense and stacks of paper money. They believe that as long as they come on this day to this event and perform this ritual in this temple, all their offerings will be received and their wishes granted.

Food offerings and the burnt sacrifices are meant to be consumed and used by deceased relatives, local deities and the underworld officials; they may well be meant

[39] No one knows why a letter to underworld officials has to be made into a long square paper box, Fitzgerald comments that it is made to resemble [ancient] Chinese books (1941:99), which sounds reasonable in terms of the shape and size of these paper boxes.

to be taken as tribute or even bribes by the underworld officials. The same food will then be consumed by pilgrims, and the leftovers will be taken home for their kin who could not come in person. "Help yourself to some, you will be blessed" they kindly invited me. "This food was sacrificed on the altar; thus it is cleansed [spiritually purified] and will bring you blessings [after you consume it]."

For the host village, this event was a major source of income. It was organized and managed by the village's Senior Dongjing Association (SDA) in an orderly way. Members of SDA and most *lao mama hui* took turns to organise all the services for visitors. At the entrance of the main hall, there were four people recording the contributions and offering prayers and blessings. They tied a red ribbon or pinned a piece of red cloth on the donors' clothes according to the amount of money each contributed. The four men were overwhelmed and exhausted by the endless crowds. Two big drawers were filled with cash.

The temple at this event provided a site to exhibit ethnic identity. From among the crowds in the main temple hall, a middle-aged woman sang in front of *benzhu*, claiming in her singing that she was the reincarnation of the princess of the well-known legendary Bai State (*baizi guo*).[40] Then another middle-aged woman

[40]This is not a case of spirit possession. Also see Chapter Three regarding the study of Bai history by Bai elite and legendary theme three. The legend about a *baizi guo* established by the *boren* and ruled Yunnan for 400 years appears in many local gazetteers from the late Nanzhao period. *Baizi guo* was recorded as *baiguo* by Liu Wenzhen (1991:1079-1080) in the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty. Some historians, such a Bao Lubing (2002[1942] Han), Xiang Da (1954/2) argue that legends about the Bai king and related events are mere fictions of the ruling class. Duan Dingzhou, a Bai intellectual sho published his book *The Origin of Baizi Guo* in 1998, argues it is a historical fact. Other Bai researchers also defend its existence (see Li Zhengqing 1998: 216-226; Li Xinghua (1959:72-75). Lin Chaomin argues that the legend is a result of the formation of *wuman* and *baiman*, it reflects the situation of Nanzhao and Dali states (personal communication). Hayashi (1995:36) argues that *baizi guo* was

started to sing her praises to *benzhu*. The former attracted half a dozen women who enjoyed her singing technique and personal narration in the singing. One of her audience confirmed to me that this singing woman was the princess of the legendary Bai king simply because "I live on faith in Buddha (*wo ye shi chi fo jia fan de*), so I definitely know!" Even though I asked her if she came to this event annually in local tongue, the self-proclaimed princess answered me in Mandarin "Yes, I do. I am Yi, I am not Bai, but I can speak Bai". Her pronounced identity could be clearly seen from her elaborate Yi dress. She thus identified herself with the Yi without being asked, given the Yi dress she was wearing. The second singer did not attract any one's attention except mine. Before the first singing woman left, she promised those surrounding her that she would come again next year and anyone who was interested could go to the Bai king temple [about 10 km away] and find her there. Then she turned to me and said mysteriously that "come for me sometime, not everyone can find me, we will see how it goes." This unexpected exchange in the temple shows that all the scholarly debates over a legendary Bai king and an ancient Bai state are often rooted in beliefs and practices found among ordinary villagers.

When I asked about the name of the *benzhu* on the main altar, the pilgrims provided me with imperial titles such as *aimin huangdi* (loving-the-people emperor), or *jianguo huangdi* (state-founder emperor). Realising these were not names, they admitted that they did not know, or that they simply could not think of the names since there were so many *benzhu* in different temples they visited all year round. This

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nothing more than an entity ruled by one of the local big clans. According to Lien Juichih (2003:87-88), the legendary Bai king got his name from Suklodana-raja, the uncle of Sakyamuny, to enhance his authority and legitimacy.

did not mean they did not care about who they worshipped. Regardless of where the interviewees came from, all claimed that Duan Zongbang[41] was the *benzhu* on the altar, while Duan Zongbang's second or third brother was located in other *gua sa na* villages. Obviously, Duan Zongbang was prestigious, the most popular as ancestor of the local king as well as the supreme god in Dali. Yet one woman seemed not so interested in Duan's central status; she told me with great confidence and satisfaction:

> If you are interested in finding out who is who on the altar, you'd better go with us to our village temple. We have just finished re-building the temple, we have more *foyeye* (grandpa Buddha) [than there are here], and all the *foyeye* there have got their names and titles in the tablets at their feet. It is much easier; [being literate,] you can read it and you will get to know all the names of the deities.

With several years' fieldwork experience in different villages in Yunnan, I had seen a dozen such temples under construction either on their original or new sites. The idea of standardisation of deities had definitely been internalised. The assignment of imperial titles to underworld officials in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) was followed by further steps to ensure that these imperial titles were properly placed in grassroots temples. People felt the need to regulate local deity images, titles etc. Sichuan construction workers were the most popular as the best temple builders. Construction funding usually comes from temple contributions, subsidised by the Ethnic Minority Affairs Bureau if the villagers are lucky enough. What is important is that the visitors come to *gua sa na* annually to worship what they perceive as Bai *benzhu*.

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[41] For various stories about Duan Zongbang and his temple, see Chapter Five

Outside the temple, the open ground had been turned into a multi-functional space: some pilgrims were chanting sutras or cooking, others were playing music, dancing or simply watching. There was no dialogical singing (also see Notar 1999:228-229) during the day in Cave Village since people were so occupied with making sacrifices, music, singing and dancing in village groups, or conducting their business along the street before moving on to the next village (Creek Village). But it was a common sight to see individuals (usually senior men) listening to Bai dialogical songs and Bai tunes on their portable tape-recorders. Those old men really enjoyed the singing, although they were not physically involved in it, apart from humming along to the tunes. A Bai opera *da ben qu* was screened on a VCD stall, which attracted many people from the mountains. No one performed *da ben qu* at the event, but these locals could enjoy it via modern technology.[42] Apparently, watching other participants and listening with enjoyment to one's tape-recorder on this occasion *on the spot* are local ways of participation. The subjective, mental and emotional involvement of individual participation makes the difference between a spectator and a local participant. So the Bai participants have every reason to claim that this event is a Bai tradition.

Nothing of special significance had happened the night before except making preparations for the next day (the first day of the celebration) according to the senior women. However, they were all expecting "great fun tonight!" By "great fun" they referred to the much anticipated dialogical singing which brings great excitement and satisfaction to the audience.[43] This type of singing is a traditional way of

[42]Also see Liu Xin 2000 for a similar case in northern rural China.

[43] Frank Kouwenhoven (2006) offers an ethnographic account of similar singing in Lianhuashan,

spontaneously-composed personal communication, which can occur between two strangers, or old acquaintances who know each other through previous dialogical singings. Singers start by asking about each other's life in Bai tunes, sometimes including questions and answers regarding agriculture, farm work, and different kinds of knowledge. Such singing can be highly demanding and full of wisdom. Spontaneous composition makes it difficult for many people to actually sing, but most people enjoy listening to those who are intelligent and creative enough to express themselves in a challenging local and traditional way.[44] Lewd and obscene interjections at certain moments often come from the audience; nevertheless, subtle emotions can also be expressed. This suggests that the imaginations of sexual licence are not completely groundless. The dialogical singing is thus not only entertaining but also important to locals who find nothing else can rival this form of communication, which is only meaningful, in most cases, to fellow members in the Bai group.

Yet the ability to draw meaning from dialogical singing should not be taken for granted. It is very much dependent on the audience actually being there physically to grasp the semiotic context which is difficult to comprehend when expressed in

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northwest China, among people of multi-ethnic backgrounds such as the Tibetans and Muslims. Despite the many similarities between this Lianhuashan temple festival and *gua sa na*, the Lianhuashan festival is not identified as an ethnic event. Instead, it is referred to as a tradition. Kouwenhoven suggests that the singings "rife with erotic hints and strange metaphors" are actually flirting, yet I think more in-depth research is needed.

[44]The elderly are the most skilled in dialogical singing. One day, returning from a pilgrimage, I observed a group of senior women meet a middle-aged group from another village. After a few verbal exchanges, one of the senior women started to sing her questions to the middle-aged group, who encouraged one of them to take up the challenge. After a few singing exchanges, the middle aged group had to admit they had failed.

songs. I witnessed half a dozen instances of such singing on different occasions in my fieldwork and found that the singing was intelligible only to a very limited number of people, just as it had been in the 1930s (see Fitzgerald 1941:124). Even native speakers find it hard to grasp its meaning; most local people, including those from the same village, could not fully understand my recordings of the singing. To translate the singing communication literally is almost impossible, largely because of the poetic/prosaic nature of the sung dialogues. Moreover, some words are for rhythmic purposes, while others just maintain the tune or create a pitch. I was totally at a loss when I found out that even the audience on-the-spot could not provide a translation. They often explained to me, as one woman did; "it is simply impossible to put it in Han [language]; you will lose all the meanings. It is something we can sense; it is impossible to translate." I once suspected the singers made it unintelligible on purpose. However, from the facial expressions of those gathered around the singers, I was convinced that real communication was going on and that verbatim translation does not make any sense. It all depends on the context, which requires physically being there.

On the second day of the event 31st May 2005, I joined a group of villagers from Beam Village continuing their pilgrimage to site two, the Creek Village temple. The group were first visiting Cave Village temple "because this was part of the old routine" one of the senior women indicated, saying "some people also visit the South Temple in Sunshine Village on this occasion, but it is fine with us today, and the North Temple [Cave Village temple] is enough." After spending about an hour in the temple making sacrifices, burning incense and consulting temple keepers individually,

we went by horse-carriage to Creek Village about 8 km to the east.

6.2.3 Site two: Creek Village on the second day of the 2005 event

The first activity on arrival at the temple was to follow the same routine as on other occasions, to *koutou* and make sacrifices. As at the Cave Village temple, no one in our group knew who the main local deity in the temple was. "You have to ask people from *this* village for that", I was informed. However, none of those knew who the *benzhu* was, not even the Creek villagers. Xinuluo (the Yi king during the Nanzhao period), [45]Duan Chicheng (the monster-killer)[46] and the local dragon king[47] were all mentioned. It did not seem important who was on the altar, none of the group appeared to care, but they all were serious and devout in making sacrifices, praying, and lodging their contributions. They were sure that this was the place where people had always performed all the rituals, and that the sacrificial procedure should be performed in the same way as their ancestors and fellow villagers had done.

After each individual completed the prescribed rituals, he/she retreated to the side for a quiet place to rest, waiting there for other members of the group. Then we all continued the pilgrimage to another temple called *bamu* temple (Eight Mothers)

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[45]Li Yifu, personal communication. Also see Yang Ruihua (1997)).

[46] The story of Duan Chicheng is wide-spread in Dali. It is said that in AD 820, there was a huge monster snake in Ear Lake who often emerged and swallowed humans and husbandry. To make things worse, it often created high waves and flooded the fields. A young Bai man named Duan Chicheng was brave and wise; he held two knives in his hands and bound knives all over his body. Thus he went into the monster, killed the monster and also was killed inside. Ever since, there have been no disasters. To commemorate this hero, people buried him in Mt. Cangshan, and constructed a 'snake-bone pagoda' from the ashes of the monster.

[47] Fieldwork interview. According to Li Zhengqing (1998:214), the Bai autonym for Creek Village [aodyid aerd] means the city of the king, whom he interprets as the local mythical *Jiulong* king.

about a kilometre east of the village on the edge of the lake. The run-down *bamu* temple and pagoda accommodated some Avalokitesvara images. A visit to this temple is not described in most of the literature.

After that, relieved of all their religious obligations, the group started to seek secular aspects of the event. On the way back to the main village temple, we met a middle-aged man who started to sing back and forth with a middle-aged woman from our group. Their singing attracted other passers-by; everyone was quiet and listened attentively to the spontaneous lyrics created by the singers. The responses of the audience were reflected in their facial expressions, occasionally the singing man made men laugh and women blush.[48] After about 30 minutes, our group and the singing woman left the man and went to the primary school campus of Creek village,[49] which had been turned into a stage for various singing and dancing (see Ill. 44), and a resting place for participants. On the school grounds, there were two or three groups voluntarily performing their repertoire. Men were playing Bai tunes and women were dancing with *ba wang bian*, a dancing whisk made of bamboo and coins. Another group dancing with fans attracted many spectators. But the most popular were three or four couples engaged in dialogical singing. Layers of the audience had

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[48] As said before, the singing is hardly comprehensible in every detail even to native Bai speakers. If I could not get the songs translated on the spot, chances were slender for later interpretation. If the song sounds as if it is for the singers rather than the general audience, this is due to the language differences among the Bai within Dali. Such translation tasks were stressful, meaningless and tedious for my informants. It is common for many people to imagine such singings are often charged with flirtation or expressions of love. I would say some of dialogical singings could express the singers' experience of, or attitudes towards, love.

[49] Since the school was next to the temple, the students were given three days off to make space for the event.

to press together closely (see Ill. 45) in order to hear the singing back and forth. Each singing couple attracted as many as 20-30 people, the largest crowd was about 60 people.

That same middle-aged woman was nudged enthusiastically by other women from our group to join in with another middle aged-man who initiated his interest in singing. She agreed, and picked up the singing conversation, the two singers asking about each other's background. After about fifteen minutes, the woman suddenly stood up and moved away from the singing circle. We realised that her husband had come back from the street. One younger woman spoke to the husband half-jokingly: "You'd better go back to the street, otherwise she cannot sing freely." The husband grinned and said nothing. Then he simply sat down in a corner quietly and his face went expressionless. His wife, the singing woman, moved over to his side. Thus the dialogical singing in this group stopped for a while until the husband decided to go to fill his water jar with hot water. His wife then stood up and sang a few lines, and left the scene, leaving the man singing with two senior women from our group.[50]

Our group disbanded at this stage. The singing woman and a few others sat there and had a rest. Others went to the street to buy daily necessities; some went to join the crowds pressing around other dialogical singers. At 5pm, the group started to gather together again to go home; this was about 20 km away. They said: "That's it, this is our *gua sa na*, we do this once a year. And there is no need to visit more temples, this is enough."

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[50] When she returned, she was carrying some snacks, ten locally-made fly-killer cupboards, and a basket all purchased from the street vendors. She told me they did not know how to make that kind of basket in her village. I noticed that everyone bought something from the market.

Like most participants, these people I accompanied came and went on the same day. I noticed some others commuted back and forth between home and different festival sites for two or more days. During the three-day event, I came across the same groups of people in different village temples. Their reason for participation was mainly to worship different deities. Although recreation was also part of it, it was not their central purpose. There did not appear to be a fixed itinerary, but Cave, Sunshine, Creek and Horse villages were the most popular sites for this occasion. Since these are four separate villages, people drop into the nearby village temples. Thus the number of temples involved in this event may be many more, with lesser degrees of serious worship, than the designated three in Cave, Sunshine and Creek villages.

On the way back from Creek village, I boarded a horse-drawn carriage with a group of villagers from Cave and Stream villages, whom I encountered again the next day in another village temple. They all felt reluctant to leave the site, but were concerned that there would not be any transportation available later. They filled two carriages (each could accommodate a dozen passengers) and started to sing back and forth between the two carriages. Half way to the highway, singing and laughing, we came to a villa hotel in the middle of fields overlooking the lake. The hotel was beautifully laid out and functioned as a recreation and conference centre for the local government. The coachman simply declared to me: "we want to go in and have a look at this place; it is as beautiful as a park. Why don't you come and join us." I assumed that the unexpected stop would not last long, but I was wrong. When someone suggested dancing on the small area of open ground in front of the hotel,

men started to play music with the instruments they carried with them for just such occasions and women started to dance. None of these women had been among the dancing groups at the temple, but this did not hold back their enthusiasm. They did not have their special dancing whisks (*ba wang bian*), but they made do with umbrellas. They danced on and on until it got darker and darker. The coachman came to me and made a few irrelevant remarks, and then he went to his dancing passengers and told them that I was complaining in Bai. The kind villagers stopped without any grumble, and assured me: "if you miss your bus, we will take you home." When we were back on the carriage again, they indicated that they came not only to visit temples, but also for fun. Some of them had just finished attending a local festival in another village. One of the women explained:

> There is just so much fun during these slack days of the year,[51] we will be busy in our fields in a few weeks' time. So we just grab the time and have fun. Wherever we go, we worship their village deities, and then we entertain ourselves. All Bai villages have our own *benzhu* (local deity) temples; each *benzhu* has his own anniversary celebration which may fall either in February in most cases or around this slack season when there is not much farm work. Recently, life is easier, we do not have so much land to work on, and this saves time and labour. Now, we have some money to participate in this sort of thing.

6.2.4 Site three: the Horse Village

Fitzgerald (1941:121-47) gave a detailed description of the *benzhu* procession

[51] This may not be the case though. The fixed festival dates in lunar calendar occur between the last week in May and first week in June, so they may well fall between the time of harvesting wheat, broad beans and planting rice, or after the rice is planted.

at Horse village in the 1930s. At that time a communal feast seems to have been an important part of the day and the reason for the economic prosperity *gua sa na* brought to the village.[52] However, from my observations and interviews, there seems to be no longer a *benzhu* procession in Horse Village during this event, nor is there a grand *gua sa na* parade of representative teams from different villages. In 2005 *gua sa na* in Horse Village was not that glamorous. The whole village was quiet; nothing special happened except some members of the village senior women's group started to clean the temple for pilgrims from afar. Quite a number of visitors dropped in and offered their sacrifices. About five groups stayed longer and organised sutra chanting. Villagers said groups of senior women had kept coming since the first day but there was not much traffic, and this had been the case for some time.

They listed a number of reasons for Horse village's comparative quietness, but a key point was the impact of recent socio-economic development. Changing transportation facilities have affected pilgrims' planning of their itinerary by making it easier to go home than stay in one of the villages overnight. As seen from participants from Beam village, people are relaxed about how many temples they visit during this event.[53] Such attitudes are due to the intra-village facilitations. Recently there has been a boom in private motor-bikes and horse-carriages. Transportation fees vary from six to twenty *yuan*, which is about 25-30% of most

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[52] See Fitzgerald (1941:121-47) for detail. Fitzgerald's *gua sa na* was described only as a one-day event (25th of the fourth month); he did not mention much about the two villages that people visited before they ended the festival in Horse village.

53 This does not mean that they are not serious or are unorthodox. The rules are, to some extent, in the hands of *gua sa na*-goers. But to what extent has *gua sa na* become a tool of cultural management used by those people whose voices never heard? This question will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

pilgrims' daily budget. Convenient intra-village transportation was unimaginable prior to the 1980s when getting to the main temple might entail one full day's walking. In contrast, most current *gua sa na*-goers now plan for a single day, which saves time and money.

The rapid urbanization and economic development facilitate the participation of visitors in one way but hinder participation in another. Rural land reform has motivated villagers to get a greater yield from their land. In households with insufficient land, adults migrate to urban areas for job opportunities. Under the lure of 'modernity' and the exciting cosmopolitan lifestyle, farming has been left to senior folk. Such a situation has created a lack of available participants, both old and young.

Gua sa na was only an index of some beautiful memories to those who no longer participate physically. In Bay village, a group of old men in their late 50s and 60s confided that they had stopped going to the event because "there was less fun than formerly." Then they reminisced about the good old days when they were young:

> Life was much more interesting in the past, there was such an abundance and variety of fish in Ear lake, palm-size fish were [as cheap as] the young cabbages we have now. And we could eat different kinds of fish in different seasons. A single cast of the net would catch 50 to 100 kilos of fish. When we were young, we would fish along the way to *gua sa na* sites, this would provide us with food and cash by selling the surplus there. On the way home, we would again fill our boat with fish, it was so wonderful coming back with a boatful of fish and all the fun from *gua sa na*. And before *gua sa na*, we would take part in local deity festivals here in Bay Village [which still involve several adjacent villages]. Now it is quite different, not so many fish are available. At least two native fish species have become extinct. Grass-fish are thorny and we did not eat it at all in the past, even so, there are not many

> grass-fish left in the lake now. In a word, you just cannot compare the *gua sa na* you experienced this year with what we had when we were young, now it is totally different! "

Such lamenting often ran on and on; the focus was always on the recreational aspect, exactly as it was in Fitzgerald's day (1941:130): "to most people it is a day of carnival, a rare spectacle breaking the monotony of village life, something to go and watch." Various locals always cited the recreational aspect as a reason for going or not going to *gua sa na*. Such nostalgia for the good old days is common and is related to the current economic and political development projects.

So, what emerges about *gua sa na* from my fieldwork has not so much to do with the sexual licence suggested the media, government documents and some textual records. At least, there are no observable activities, though longings for possible romance do inspire many people whether or not they participate in person. What attracts local participants, in a secular sense, is the dialogical singing that they really enjoy. My research also revealed that participants in 2005 believed that there was no fixed itinerary for the event. If this is so, why do people keep going to some temples while ignoring others? This question requires a return to the meanings of *gua sa na*. Before that, let me consider what the local Bureau of Culture has done with *gua sa na*.

6.3 Recent local government's endeavours[54]

Since the 1980s, *gua sa na* has been promoted as "retrievable" (Anagnost 1994: 223) in the struggle for development alternatives by the local government. Its significance is also embedded in its economic value for the market economy.[55] To celebrate Dali's position as a centre of the Bai culture, the Bureau of Culture, mostly composed of members of the local Bai elite introduced in Chapter Three, has turned to traditional events. Considering it involves a number of villages and local people, *gua sa na* is an ideal collective cultural expression of Bai identity.[56] *Gua sa na* was thus used to apply for listing in the World Heritage List. This local government initiative has been well supported by governments at all levels. Striving for world recognition will boost Dali as a national tourist destination and illustrate the good political performance of local officers. 'Promoting a festival market' to promote local business opportunities is the agenda. A successful application will bring funding, political influence and resources. They even plan to stage mini *gua-sa-na* festivals upon demand (also see Notar 1999:242).

An office to apply for World Heritage Listing was set up in Dali in 2002. In

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[54]At this stage, Local government's endeavours are now more market-oriented than for ideology-oriented as in the 1950s. For official sanction and promotion of minority cultures, see McCarthy (2004).

[55] Even in Fitzgerald's day, the economic aspect was "at least as important as the religious [one]" (1941:130).

[56] As mentioned earlier, Yang Zhengye, a local Bai cultural researcher and now the chairperson of the cultural bureau, wrote articles to promote this event as Bai heritage. His first article entitled "*Baizu 'raoshanlin' wenhua lunshu*" was printed in Bai Studies (informal publication) and reprinted in the Journal of Yunnan University of the Nationalities in 2000/2. A book entitled 《大理白族绕三灵》 (*Raoshanlin of the Bai in Dali)* was published in 2005 of which Yang is the co-author.

2004, the application was accepted by the national Chinese assessment team and became one of the five (out of an original 16) projects aiming at the listing in 2007. The *Application Proposal for World Heritage Listing* (APWHL) defines *gua sa na* as "a festival in which the Bai people cherish freedom in life," and "the most characteristic Bai festival." (APWHL: 162) The application declares that "Bai people observe this festival to cherish their own cultural history and maintain their cultural roots."(APWHL: 175) The implication of sexual licence is treated as a positive historical remnant in the government application, though it is exaggerated and rationalised:

> The fact that *gua-sa-na* was written as '三林 (three forests) and 桑林 (mulberry trees)' rather than '三灵' (three spirits) [in historical documents] indicates the sexual implication.(APWHL: 167)
>
> [*Gua sa na*] provides three days for those unfortunate men and women who are in unhappy marriages, to step out of conventional time and space, and to pursue their happiness. (APWHL: 171)
>
> The tradition of meeting one's love at *gua sa na* also shows respect for women, *gua sa na* promises women three-days of [freedom], which is a short but concrete commitment. (APWHL: 171)

A number of other features have been also specified and promoted including dialogical singing, *benzhu* cults and sun-stickers. Dialogical singing and *benzhu* cults are the two observable motifs at today's *gua sa na* which have been linked to sexual licence and animist cults in an imagined local history. Dialogical singing is, as a matter of fact, a very popular communication technique among many ethnic groups in Yunnan, yet the APWHL emphases *Bai dialogical singing*. I was quite doubtful about this Bai-ness since such singing is wide spread. My informants, however, could

not be more strongly convinced of this:

> All dialogical singing during *gua sa na is in* Bai, and only intelligible to local rural Bai-speakers. [It is] just like you've got to sing Beijing Opera in Beijing dialect, right? It cannot be otherwise.

Like the *benzhu* cults themselves, the point is not that dialogical singing is a common cultural feature among different ethnic minorities, but that here and now it is Bai tradition when it is sung in Bai.

One could say that *gua sa na* is more representative of Bai ethnicity than *benzhu* processions or other local festivals like *guanyin hui, raohaihui,* or *shibaoshan* singing meets, because it involves several villages and its participants come from a wider area. The worship of the Bai king is promoted as another cultural speciality, and he is promoted as a shared ancestor who transcends differences and distances among the Bai all over the prefecture. In general, the *benzhu* visited in *gua sa na* are regarded as a great focus for the whole Bai all over the prefecture and a symbol of the Bai.[57] By 'recycling tradition' (Siu 1990) in this way, the Application brings together different phenomena into a unity that expresses differentiation. The fact that *gua sa na* only covers a certain number of villages and is not necessarily attended exclusively by the Bai people, is not mentioned at all. The fact that images in these temples are *Bai benzhu* rather than Han ancestors or any other totemic idols imposes a symbolic boundary reinforcing Bai-ness.

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[57] Fitzgerald (1941:126) mentions that the event covers "half a dozen other villages to the north as well as at Mer Ger Yu." This is true, but participants are not confined to these villages, and include people from Xiaguan, Dali and across the lake. My fieldwork gave me a chance to interview groups from both Betel and Fountain counties, but not all of Dali prefecture, since people in Sword County would not come because they told me they had a similar event in their county.

Some ordinary practices are amplified in the APWHL. For example, special stick-on round labels, called "sun-stickers" (*tai yang gao*) by locals, have been made into a big metaphor. The small commodities are sold at the *gua sa na* market and pasted on the side of the forehead (mostly senior women).[58] People say this practice helps repel evil spirits and stops headaches. No one knows why they are called *tai yang gao* (sun-stickers). But in the APWHL, they are linked to sun-worship and the generative power of the sun. In addition, a legend about a mountain regarded as the hometown of the sun-god is inserted to support the theme of sun-worship included in the Application. Moreover, the Application points out that the Bai words for 'the sun' and 'sex' are both pronounced *nic*. Putting the two ideas together, the Application interprets the sun-sticker as "a symbolic decoration that reveals the true meaning of *gua sa na*", suggesting its association with sexual license. An imagined eroticism is therefore overtly projected as the "ancient meaning of this event". To make it impressive, the Application even refers to the event as a "Bai Valentine" and enlists a love-song transcript. This illustrates a pronounced differentiation of the exotic Self and the modern Other, the Other not necessarily being inferior to the Self. The reversal of this Self-Other binary is notable since the reproduction of differences is meant to take advantage of and make use of, the difference.

None of my informants at the 2005 *gua sa na* event knew anything about the local government's efforts. When I was discussing the APWHL with a group of participants, questions emerged immediately; the most popular question was: who gets the 'big stuff' and who gets the 'pickings'. Those who thought local people (as

[58] Some were decorated with the Eight Diagrams; others with a crescent moon (also see Fitzgerald (1941:127).

opposed to government officials) would only get the pickings, if any thing, did not think it crucial whether the application succeeded or not. Other informants thought the government should not get involved in the festival and leave it to the people alone. "They [the local government] will spoil all the fun if they put a finger in it" said one person. Still others, however, were concerned about where officials would choose to put their energies if the application was successful. These people thought obtaining World Heritage Listing would be good because they were concerned about funding for temple construction and renovation.

We do not know at this stage what *gua sa na* will become if it gains institutional recognition at the international level. From the local government's efforts, we can predict that it will continue with increasingly new inputs from global, national and regional centres. The phrase 'revitalising cultural heritage' appears often in newspapers and government documents. Such endeavours draw attention to the roles that local government officials have played in the promotion of the event and the new ways that their power is exercised.

Moreover, *gua sa na* will still be at the centre in the minds of locals, who believe that *gua sa na* IS an occasion when Bai people experience Bai community and display Bai ethnic identities. Government officials need not worry about losing the traditional meanings of the event because the temples, the households and local families will still be involved in the celebration. Local people and official efforts thus go hand in hand and seem to be two different facets of an on-going "cultural revival" scheme.

6.4 *Gua sa na*: meaning revisited

Earlier, I raised the question of why people keep going to some temples while ignoring others. This question can be addressed by looking back at the meanings of *gua sa na*. As discussed in this chapter, *gua sa na* means different things to different participants. To senior women and *lao mama hui* members (see Ill. 43), it is religious and recreational. [59] They feel obliged to fulfil the pilgrimage for the sake of their families, and they also enjoy the day(s) away from household chores. This is also the case with most other regular *gua sa na*-goers. All share the idea that they should visit certain temples during particular days in a year, although exactly which temples should be visited may vary. Meanings do not always need to be known to everyone although everyone agrees that there was a meaning but it has been lost. Regular *gua sa na*-goers thus display multiple identifications with the traditional sites and thereby challenge any monolithic meaning of *gua sa na*. Incense-burning is a must, even for romance-seekers[60] and holiday-makers. It goes without saying that people participate in *gua sa na* for fun, especially for the dialogical singing on a cross-regional scale that they would not be able to enjoy to the same extent at other times of the year.[61]

However, even if we view *gua sa na* as both recreational and religious, we

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[59]I use the terms recreational and religious rather than sacred and profane to avoid discussion of the opposition which is not adequate to explain the Bai complexity. There is no clear-cut boundary between sacred and secular.

[60]As I made it clear in this chapter, I, as a mature aged urban woman did not see any real romance-seekers. However, Liang Yongjia's (2003:176-78, 222) account of two of his informants seems to suggest the opportunity for an extra-marital affair is still a main theme (one of which was recorded in 1997). I realise that there is a gender difference. I did come across someone who made some subtle suggestions, yet I did not think it was a result of *gua sa na*.

[61] Except for the *Shibaoshan*, a singing meet which is geographically inaccessible to most people.

still need to define what is recreational or religious in local terms. *Gua sa na* is not a pure Bai social event that stands alone as Fitzgerald (1941:122) views it.[62] *Gua sa na* is a celebration of the multi-cosmological unification of three dimensions: the celestial, this world, and the underworld. Various types of entertainment such as singing, dancing and various performances are meant to please *benzhu* and ancestors. *Gua sa na* rituals are merely repetitions of other important rituals such as those for *benzhu* processions and ancestor-worship. Routine sacrifices are made in the way that they perceive their forefathers did. Most *gua sa na* goers I met expressed their contentment with the fact that they could both perform their normal rituals and enjoy the day as a holiday. As they said, "just like you Han like to sing *huadeng,*[63] we Bai like to sing Bai tunes on such occasions."

Judging from the time people plan the event and allocate the necessary expenditure, we can see that their main motivation to participate is religious, although most of them would readily declare they also come for fun. This can be exemplified by the Beam villagers (see 5.1) who spent three-quarters of the day visiting temples and fulfilling sacrifice obligations, requesting something from or giving thanks to *benzhu*. Making a religious pilgrimage is significant because it is believed to have practical effects. Some interviewees came to the 2005 event because they had *not* made it the year before; some others came precisely because they *had done so* the year before.[64] The rationale for participating in the event include: for (1)

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[62] Fitzgerald fails to see that the state-sanctioned belief system has crept into local practice. Treating local community as an isolated entity, Fitzgerald cannot explain why it is important to maintain *gua sa na* as a Bai tradition when much of the Bai culture has already been influenced by the Han Chinese.

[63] *Huadeng* is a local Yunnanese form of Han opera.

[64] A *lao mama hui* head said this to me: "those who participate have *xiang* (incense) *huo* (fire, referring

a smooth life, (2) fortune, (3) sons, (4) health and (5) promotion or school/university admission. Each *gua sa na*-goer may have his/her own priority for each pilgrimage. A general ignorance of theologies and limited understanding of Buddhism, Confucianism or Daoism is common, as it was in the 1930s (see Fitzgerald1941:111), yet they still want to maintain regular relationships with the *benzhu* in these temples at their own pace and in their own ways.[65] Choosing certain temples is a result of considerations such as specific needs, available time and previous promises.

Viewing *gua sa na* as a religious event does not mean it is an occasion for praying for rain as legendary theme five and some literature suggest and some researchers argue (Fitzgerald 1941:122, Notar1998, Yang Zhengye 1994:22 Yang Zhengye 1994:22, 1999:224-226).[66] Both my fieldwork data and Fitzgerald's study offer little support for this conclusion because the event and rain are not always closely linked. Since *gua sa na* falls on fixed dates in the lunar calendar, it may well be before or after the rain has come, such as in 1938 when the harvest was not collected while the rice was already being planted during the time of the *gua sa na*

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to burning sacrifices); people without *xiang-hua* [commitment] will not go. You don't know what *xiang-huo* means? It means when someone falls ill or something unpleasant happens in a household, people will go to see *xiang-huo*. And then they will find where their *xiang-huo* is." This means they will find out from the divination to which temples and to what deities they must burn their sacrifices.

[65] The apparent contradiction is obvious in Fitzgerald (1941) when Fitzgerald recounts the general religious attitudes of the Bai, he concludes that the Bai people are unquestionably religious after commenting that the Bai do not have any religion.

[66]Rain-praying is also included in the *Application for World Heritage Listing*. Yang Zhengye (1994:20-28) makes the same point as others such as Zhan Chengxu (1994). But I found it unconvincing. If we look to the history of China, we find that rain-making prayers were a state-sanctioned ritual performed from village level to the imperial court, but this does not mean *gua sa na* is or was such an occasion simply because it falls between the dry and wet season.

(Fitzgerald 1941:126,122). [67] Different villages have slightly varying farming calendars, and agricultural rituals are not organised routinely by senior women groups; only when there is inadequate water.

The rain-praying ritual is site-specific and has a lot to do with the exact site where traditionally people perform the ritual. The site is crucial because it will affect the ritual's efficacy, which has nothing to do with *gua sa na*. I came across a number of rain-making rituals during my fieldwork. These exhortations were carried out exclusively by women[68] on the same spot where previous generations used to pray for rains, even if they have become parks, office buildings, shops, or roads. Additional sutra-chanting rituals will be arranged if no rain ensues after one ritual is performed, all at the same location, regardless of changes in the social or physical landscape. [69]

Praying for rain also has a lot to do with the magic of specific *benzhu*. In the minds of Horse villagers, *gua sa na* has no association with rain, but their *benzhu* does. Rain will come after their *benzhu* procession, which is ten days after *gua sa na*. In 2005, there had not been much rain since the previous winter all the way through

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67 In 2005, the rain arrived about 20 days after *gua sa na* and there was a serious drought in Dali.

68 No one knows why men do not participate in rain-praying sessions. "This is the way we have it done for generations" is not only a facile answer but reveals what and how things should be done in the minds of locals. Looking at practices in other parts of China, it generally seems to be the exclusive domain of 'pure' women (women after menopause), because of *yin-yang* dynamics. Droughts are *yang*, resulting from, and also creating, strong sun and scorching heat. The more severe a drought becomes, the more excessive *yang* becomes. At times of such off-balance situations, *yin* is needed to off-set the overwhelming *yang*. That is why men are excluded from rain-imploring rituals.

69 This is not to say that people do not pray for rain or for sons during *gua sa na*. People kneel down and pray for the different needs in their lives. But my interviews reveal that efficacy is their concern, and the traditional location and practice for a certain purpose play a critical role in what they do and may expect from taking part in this event.

to June when it got extremely dry and hot. During the *benzhu* procession, one of the villagers said to me:

> Believe it or not, our local deity is very efficacious, especially for bringing rain. I promise you we will have rain within five days if it does not rain in three [after our *benzhu* procession].

Accordingly, it rained on the fourth day, so this informant came to me proudly, saying: "You've got to believe me now; I told you our *benzhu* would bring us rain within three or five days." This efficacy of rain-making is believed to be a direct result of the local deity festival, not *gua sa na*.[70] Fitzgerald (1941:127) made the same point: "[n]o Min Chia regards the rite as designated to seek rain," which was confirmed to me on the 2005 occasion. None of the participants I interviewed mentioned that they came to pray for rain. I suggest that this idea of rain-praying is influenced by Han Chinese ritual history.[71] It is through the same lens/perspective as the legacy of sexual licence, a result of exoticisation.

So what really matters in the above discussion is that, although many of the features of *gua sa na* are extremely common in any Chinese community, such features are perceived and claimed as Bai.

Gua sa na occurs at "contact zones" (Clifford 1997:7) where state ideologies and local practices negotiate. As noted in the historical texts previously discussed, a

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[70] Horse Village shares the same *benzhu* with Stream village, whose procession takes place in the tenth month, although Stream Village is close to *gua sa na* sites.

[71] Granet (1930:171) points out that the Chinese never ceased to pray at the same time and using the same rites for births to enrich their families and for rain to make the seed generate. Contrary to Fitzgerald's (1941:126) observation, drought was, and still is, a burning issue in Dali at this time of the year. It is true that June is a month of abundant rainfall in Dali, but when and where it rains is crucial to farmers.

hierarchical order is consistent all the way through most of the legendary themes. Some of these stories can still be recounted by a few elders in some villages. State ideologies have been diffused and institutionalized (C.K.Yang 1961), and amalgamated into "local versions" (Freeman 1974)[72] in the form of the worship of a loving-the-people emperor and a local hero. Pre-existing cults reach out to embraced state symbols which become less a representation of state power than a manifestation of ethnic identity.[73] Cave Village temple has been 'standardised' (Watson 1985) as a legitimate centre acceptable by the state and embracing by the locals. Yet this thesis does not seek to determine whether this compromise is predominantly a product of state power or local agency, but rather seeks to illustrate how such contacts exemplify different aspects of Bai Identity.

6.5 *Gua sa na*: an open stage for different actors

This chapter has showed how an originally regional festival, *gua sa na,* has been associated with Bai ethnicity since imperial periods and became exclusively Bai after the 1950s. *Gua sa na* has been located in different discourses over time: ranging from being banned as a practice of 'superstition' to its promotion as an important ingredient of the local traditional cultural heritage. This shift reveals multifaceted

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[72]This is often theorised in the study of Chinese religion as a "top down" or "bottom up" model. For a top-down approach, see de Groot (from Bell 1989); for a bottom-up approach, see Granet (1930). For a worm-eye view, see Watson (1985), and for a theoretical analysis, see Bell (1989).

[73] No sharp conflict, harmonious integration, or smooth penetration of the state can be inferred from my observations in 2005. *Gua sa na* is not exclusively state engineered, nor absolutely in the hands of society.

relationships: a rationale of re-assessing tradition at the local level, and a negotiation between the locality and the state. Yet its official categorisation as Bai helps pin it down within the Bai culture and tradition.

Gua sa na has become a vehicle to empower the local political elite. Although the current political elite no longer seek a nexus between celestial and human governments, *gua sa na* is still essential to the attempt of the new 'state organ' (Schein 1989:199) to revive local tradition in a national landscape (see Mueggler 2002 and Siu 2002 for more cases among the Yi and southern Chinese). To members of the local elite, *gua sa na* has become an object to be restored, harnessed and managed. State and society are not always in conflict, nor are they always in harmony either, as Shih (2002) observes elsewhere in China. The relationship between them is a dynamic.

Gua sa na fits into the local settings and traditional customs perfectly in terms of the people, the place,[74] timing and the language used. *Gua sa na* continues to offer explanations for daily life to regular *gua sa na*-goers, and a way in which they can express what they perceive as Bai. Some worshippers are not sure where the supreme deity is located or who is on the altar; similarly, most local *gua sa na* participants and nearby villagers have no idea of the origin of *gua sa na* or what its Bai name really mean. They simply do not bother themselves about this, which actually anchors a collective sense of Bai-ness as discussed in Chapter Five. They always assert that it "must be one of the Bai ancestors or heroes." Going further into their ignorance of whom they worship and assertions of whom they perceived they were worshipping,

[74] Also see chapters five and seven.

we may see that the legendary themes and the deities in the three temples imply that *gua sa na* has survived in a largely hostile socio-political landscape by incorporating "an imperial metaphor" (Feuchtwang 1992) and inculcating appropriate values (Rawski 1985:408).[75]

But we have to be aware that incorporation of state symbols can mean appropriating these symbols or being controlled by them, or both at different levels. Such a metaphor as *gua sa na* may well be reproduced in a number of changed forms when it penetrates the non-literate population, including being employed as a means to sustain and exhibit ethnic identities, and as a symbol of Bai tradition. *Gua sa na* has expanded in significance with the growing sense of ethnic awareness in recent years.

The legacy of sexual licence suggested in the media and printed publications is not much observable today any more than it was in the past. Yet importantly, the 'internal orientalism' (Schein 1997, 2000) or "self-orientalisation" (Dirlik 2001:9) exemplified in such a legacy have been appropriated to maintain boundaries between a self-defined Self-Other dichotomy, the Bai versus other ethnic groups, and the Bai versus the Han. The latter contrasts with the politics of "the marginality of self-identity" (C. Hsu 1991).[76] The legacy evokes the possibility of erotic and exotic fantasies of sensuality, which are still associated with ethnicity and a 'primitive way

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[75]This is often interpreted as cultural understandings of the hierarchies of power and the proper etiquette for dealing with the imperial bureaucracy (see A. Wolf 1974a, Feuchtwang 1977). State symbols as revealed in such practices are emphasized as "a teaching device" (Ahern 1981:110) or "a standardised educational curriculum" (Watson 1985:292).

[76] Cho-yun Hsu (1991) defines marginality as one's own ambiguous status of belonging simultaneously to more than one entity, and either of these identities is complete.

of life', a desired Other.

On the one hand, the experience of regular *gua sa na*-goers shows that they do not bother to make its meaning clear; they feel comfortable handling the elusiveness well. On the other hand, the apparent absence of sexual licence is often picked up by these people to show that the Bai have a comparatively higher degree of 'civilisation' compared with other ethnic minorities, who may still retain such 'primitive' practices in one form or another. The discourse of sexual licence was a way of talking about the differences between a "primitive" and a "modern" marriage system within the Morgan-Marxist paradigm during Mao's era (1949-1976). It makes a strategy of marking cultural differences.

To what extent does Bai identity make sense in *gua sa na*? It is difficult to deny that a sense of Bai-ness and our-ness is epitomised through this cross-regional event. The rituals, as mentioned earlier, are the same as the ones they perform at home altars and local deity temples. The food sacrificed is often perceived as a Bai tradition (such as the coloured fries called *ganlan*, see Ill. 38). And almost all pilgrims are Bai-speakers, whether or not they are 'ethnically' Bai. Bai costumes are put on for this event even if people do not often wear them daily except a few Yi participants from afar. The sense of our-ness is fully acknowledged through other details: Bai tunes, Bai dialogical singings, Bai dancing … Even if many are performing something that cannot be identified as exclusively Bai; it is still a *Bai occasion* in a *Bai social setting*. Just as it was in the 1930s, *gua sa na* is an occasion "to be especially in their own rite, one in which the city folk, and therefore the [Han]

Chinese and half Chinese, have no part" (Fitzgerald 1941:131).[77] It provides "a crucial spatial and temporal narrative which reproduces villager's historical and cultural identity." (Notar 1999:241)

Gua sa na is vital to the reinforcement of Bai identity, although it is not entirely programmed by a variety of cultural rules, nor determined by the kind of externalised political and economic forces as in other parts of China (e.g. Jordan 1972:13; Siu 1989:13). In spite of the fact that villagers have no say in what the local government is going to do with this festival, which has been the case for centuries, the importance is still to seek a middle ground where different stakeholders can agree on a multitude of fragments that can be accommodated into Bai tradition.

[77]"They do feel that the rites are in some way bound up with the country and its farmers, and are not a matter for regulation by city people and government officials"(Fitzgerald 1941:131).

Chapter Seven

Ethnic Identities under the Tourist Gaze

Ill. 46: Duan Zongbang in *Benzhu* Cultural Square. Nanzhao Feature Island. 2005.

Ill. 47: Signs on Nanzhao Feature Island. 2005.

Ill. 48: Mother Sayi. Nanzhao Feature Island. 2005.

Ill. 49: Clip from *Five Golden Flowers*. Butterfly Pond. 2005.

Ill. 50: Shaping market. 2001.

Chapter Seven

Ethnic Identities under the Tourist Gaze[1]

This chapter focuses on how the social landscape of Dali has changed in response to the development of tourism. In efforts to promote the tourism industry, the Bai have been placed centre stage since the late 1990s. The construction of local history and Bai culture has been, to a large extent, in response to the gaze of tourists, and culture has become a product, produced and sold, bought and consumed in the form of tourist packages and commodities. In this process, economic development goes hand in hand with identity strategies to match the needs of an expanding free market economy. Local people contrive to play different cards in order to attract tourists, renovating and inventing cultural traditions. Phoney as it may appear, this touristification of local culture is also a domain in which we can examine the construction of Bai Identity and a *minzu* consciousness. Here a form of "touristic culture" (Picard 1996) or "touristic ethnicity" (Wood 1998) contributes to the reconstruction of self-identity, in a way similar to the case of the Yi (see Swain 1990: 26-32) and Miao (Oakes 1998) like many other minorities elsewhere in the world, including local identities in Han areas in China.

Tourism is an arena where we can see intellectuals and ordinary people alike

[1] I'd like to express my gratitude to Dr. Irena Atejevik and Dr. Steven Doorne from the Victoria University of Wellington, with whom I conducted previous fieldwork funded by the Asia 2000 Foundation in June 2000 and March 2001. Part of the chapter was published online in the *Thai-Yunnan Project Bulletin* Nov. 2, 2001 under the title "The Discourse of Tourism Development in the Construction of a Bai Cultural and Historical City".

manipulating forms of ethnicity, capitalising on their own cultural traditions, and dispelling the aura of 'backwardness' that clings to variant forms of ethnicity (also see Notar, 1999; Schein, 2000). The Bai have participated in the self-reflexive symbolic activity of cultural politics, adopting an external view of this while maintaining their own subjectivity and treating their culture as a "thing" to be strategically deployed and represented.

This chapter argues that the impact of tourism has stimulated people to *act ethnically* upon their *minzu* label. The tourist trade in Dali has been appropriated by various interest groups seeking to construct their own versions of Bai history and culture. Locals also benefit from the marketing of ethnic diversity. Thus the study of Bai identity in a tourist context can be a fruitful way to deepen and enrich our understanding of the Bai. This chapter will first introduce state initiatives that have shifted the state's primary role in defining *minzu* identity into the hands of local actors in the tourist industry. Then I will discuss how a one-day Dali tourism package displays the Bai people and local history to tourists. I will also discuss some commodities and non-Bai touristic ethnicities so as to illustrate the mosaic of current cultural reality and its complex relationship with the formation of Bai identity within this complexity. The chapter concludes that the state, local government, tourists and locals all play essential roles in defining, maintaining and consuming Bai Identity. Tourism is an ideal stage where the different parties and their contributions to building up a Bai Identity in the tourist map of Dali are displayed.

The day-tour package discussed in this chapter is not really "a kind of reflexive 'Orientalism'" Shih (2002:66, 67), which would suggest a kind of

passiveness and marginalisation on the part of the people concerned. Rather it shows how locals actively appropriate state-defined categories and reshape them into the repertoire they desire.

7.1 State initiatives in promoting tourism

Promoting ethnic cultures (*hongyang minzu wenhua)* has long been an aim of the state in its project to build a multicultural nation-state identity. This motif has found a new application in the development of tourism. After the 1980s, tourism brought enormous economic benefits. Tourism has become a synonym for economic improvement in official discourses in China. The number of domestic tourists has increased dramatically, and they are taken into consideration in development planning. A common patriotic slogan is, "Visit the splendid landscape of the country, learn about the long history of the country and about a unified multi-ethnic nation-state", and this was often displayed in the media and tourist brochures. And the 1998 national project of *xibu da kaifa,* "Developing the Western Provinces," pushed the development discourse related to tourism.

At the provincial level, tourism was one of the initiatives the Yunnan government took. The primary attempts to open Dali to the outside world were aimed as presenting a culturally unique and homogeneous Bai to the outside world. As mentioned in Chapter One, images of Dali and the Bai have been popularised in the minds of many Chinese by a feature movie, *The Five Golden Flowers*, and by a bestselling Gongfu work of fiction: *Heavenly Dragons*. Bai people and Bai ethnicity

were regarded as solid foundations on which to base the development of tourism, an alternative way to achieve modernity (Oakes 1998).[2] So Dali has been marketed as a locality where tourists can consume Bai culture, while most of its other residents, including the Han and some other ethnic minorities, are ignored in such promotions.

Governments at all levels invested to improve the basic infrastructure of the region.[3] The number of hotels in Dali grew from 56 in 1995 to 128 in 1999[4], ranking it third in the number of hotels authorised to take in foreigners in one city in the whole country at that time. Transportation also took on a new look. Compared with a two-day journey from Kunming in the early 1980s, the opening of Dali airport in 1995 meant Kunming was only a 45-minute flight away. The railway from Guangzhou (Canton) to Dali was completed by the end of 1998; a standard expressway from Chuxiong to Dali and a high-quality highway from Dali to Lijiang were also finished by May 1999. Besides all this investment, Dali also possessed the three minimum conditions for the development of a tourist industry identified by Seiler-Baldinger (1988): ethnicity, accessibility, and infrastructure. In the first half of 1995, total tourist arrivals in Dali reached 1.54 million (1.52 million domestic tourists and 20,000 from overseas).[5] In 1998, tourism brought in 1.088 billion-*yuan* and

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[2] Due to the three-decade tight control of a closed-door policy and planned economy, the resistance against Westernisation was strong.

[3] The municipal government solicited funding and built hotels, vessels for Erhai lake tour and restored temples regardless of whether they were Buddhist, Daoist or local Bai *benzhu* temples. Anything that might trigger historical or religious memories was supported.

[4] Data from fieldwork in 1999.

[5] *A Survey of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture,* issued by Dali Prefectural Government 2001, unpublished document.

offered more than 130,000 employment opportunities.[6]

The Yunnan government originally chose Dali to initiate its campaign for tourism on the basis of its historical features, because the major source of attraction of Dali was not "marginality and pre-modernity" as in most ethnic tourist destinations in southeast Asian countries (Wood 1998:6), but history and the Bai ethnicity, which were of interest to domestic tourists. Re-establishing local history and promoting the Bai as part of that was therefore crucial.

Dali is rich in touristic cultural capital. It is often advertised as "the homeland of the Bai people", and "the hometown of the *Five Golden Flowers*." In the first few years of tourism promotion, historical sites in Dali were emphasised. Dali's past history as the centre of the glorious Nanzhao Kingdom (752–902 AD) and the powerful Dali Kingdom (938–1382) was frequently invoked. The tourist map of Dali included the southern gate of the ancient town, first built in 1382, which is also called *Wuhualou*; the Tower of Five Glories (see Fitzgerald 1941 and Ills. 1 & 51); Three Pagodas (built during the Dali Kingdom period see Ills.7 & 8) where more than 680 archival treasures were discovered during a renovation in 1978; Wuwei Temple (a Buddhist monastery); Guanyin pond, a Buddhist nunnery built around the 14th or 15th century; Nanzhao Dehua Stele inscribed in 766 to record the political and military affairs of the Nanzhao Kingdom; and Du Wenxiu's Tomb built in 1917 by local people in honour of the Hui Muslim Qing general who led a failed rebellion in 1872 (renovated in 1985).

Moreover, the official renaming of the capital city was a direct result of

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[6] Data from fieldwork, 1999.

tourism promotion. Xiaguan used to be the capital city, and the ancient town of Dali was merely the capital of one of the counties. It was not until 1983, when the ancient town joined Xiaguan, that the new capital city of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture was named Dali. Hence, the official construction of a Bai identity in Dali was accomplished, and paved the way for the reconstruction of the city's past as a historical and cultural scenic city as discussed above.

7.2 The politics of representation

The invention of "culture" and "tradition," including food, music and heritage, has been thoroughly discussed in academic discourse (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Robertson 1992). This section will discuss how local place, practices and history in Yunnan have been transformed into a kind of heuristic device which will reveal a hidden "truth" if interpreted correctly, to cater for the quest for knowledge and experience by tourists. Local place and history become known as "local characteristics" (*difang tese*) and are now taken for granted as Bai characteristics in Dali. Here, the issue is not about equal representation in the tourist process, but an issue of self-representation and staging the Bai's own authenticity.

The sense of an ethnicity constructed in the centre of tourism and its separation from the realities of daily life is strong and the two are taken for granted as separate entities. Issues in tourism of who represents who, or of a marginalised group and dominant state, as in Bali (see Picard 1996) and many Southeast Asian countries (see E. Cohen 1996 and Wood 1998), or the observer and the observed, have been

well elaborated and discussed in the anthropological literature.[7] This chapter is not about equality of representation, but about the status of self-representation and self-identification in relation to the state category, and the relationship between touristic establishments and the Bai. The development of tourism has increased local awareness of the official terminology of *Baizu* and has intensified the Bai people's concern with their identity and self-representation.

In seeking "ethnic options" to construct their identity, the Bai first seek recourse in the state label. There is a kind of a "new identity" that has emerged in the process of touristic encounters and confrontation, achieved through the efficient appropriation of the label *Baizu*, and making the best out of it.

7.2.1 The making of a historical place

In this reconstruction of a historical Dali, the local place was deliberately connected with historical events and high profile figures in local legends and folklore. An example is the Mount Cangshan area where many Buddhist temples and pagodas can be found. A small stream in the mountains is introduced by a tour guidebook as a place visited in 1636 by the famous Ming dynasty traveller, Xu Xiake (1586-1641). Lines from his well-known travel notes are cited to describe this stream. Similarly, it is said that according to local legend, a natural pool in Cangshan mountain is called "Horse Bathing Pond," which got its name from the time when Kublai Khan took his

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[7] Many other works have been preoccupied with the impacts of tourism, tourist behaviours, tourist flows, host-guest relationships and sustainability. In there, ethnic groups are often portrayed as victimised and relatively passive (see Wood 1998:20, E. Cohen 2001). This chapter does not really address the issue of the share of the tourist cake, which is very difficult to ensure even if an ethnic group is thoroughly transformed by tourism.

army there and gave his horse a bath in it.[8] Fitzgerald (1941) mentioned exactly the same pool (His Ma T'ang) that attracted local young Chinese in the late 1930s. In Fitzgerald's version, the legend goes that "a deity brings his celestial steeds to this place" (p.185). The point is: stories about the same pool have been passed on and revised. The contemporary version constitutes a clear attempt to associate this pool with a famous historical figure. Other efforts have been made to locate such historical figures as Marco Polo as a visitor to Dali. If one puts aside such stories, or simply ignores them, these places are really of little interest, not scenically worthwhile. Such interpretations and attached historical meanings cater to tourist desires for 'educational' tours, part of the expectations of domestic visitors to 'see' what they may have learned from textbooks and the media about Dali history and the Bai people.

Local history has also been reconstructed in a more tangible way by tourist entrepreneurs. After the state set the pace and the basic tone for the development of tourism, investors followed the same path. A modern exhibition of Dali history was portrayed in the Nanzhao Culture Exhibition Centre (*nanzhao wenhua chen*),[9] which was built in 1999 to "represent the history, culture, important events and religious practices of the Nanzhao Kingdom" (752-902 AD), according to its promotional brochure. This establishment gave visual form to a fundamental link between Dali, the Nanzhao Kingdom, Bai culture and the Bai people. The "authentic" ingredients in this showcase were assumed to represent *zhen* (real) ethnic Bai culture and traditions.

[8] As mentioned in Chapter Five, whether Kublai Khan made it there or not is still a question. This story and his statues in the central temple make local people believe that he did.

[9] The principal investor was said to be from Hong Kong and to have cooperate in this venture with the local government. By the end of 2003, it no longer attracted any tourists.

Regardless of what kind of history this particular tourist establishment presents, it marks a new era in which Dali displays its historical artefacts by digging up its own historical and cultural resources.[10] The Nanzhao Culture Exhibition Centre was a showcase that attempted "to fix and define, locate and regulate, fluid and malleable populations and local identities" (Tapp 2002). However, it was soon taken over by the other establishments discussed in the next sections. Local people simply blame this on the "bad luck" of the investor, while local government officials criticised it as a "blind development project" for its failure to attract tourists. They were all clear it was a business enterprise rather than an expression of Bai ethnicity.

History and place are also displayed in the furniture of the first hotel in Dali, the Five Golden Flowers Hotel in the middle of the ancient town. All the furniture is in traditional Bai style, made from local marble and wood, and all hotel attendants are required to wear Bai costumes.

The above discussion shows that the state, local government, tourists and developers are embracing the legal Bai label to display an unchanging Bai cultural tradition and history, although life in the Nanzhao period must have been very different from what the Nanzhao Culture Exhibition Centre displayed. At the same time, local people have responded to tourism in novel and creative ways. The revised story about the stream discussed above indicates that local history, traditions, the place and the Bai people have been open to modifications. The following section will focus on what is assembled in present day Dali and presented as "Bai" for tourists.

[10] A similar replica was set up in Guangzhou in the late 1980s and Beijing in the early 1990s. The main objective was surely to earn cash income through admission and other services, so as to enable big state-owned leisure parks to support themselves instead of remaining totally dependent on state fiscal revenues.

The tourism industry is an "incongruent mixture of energies in a grand self-fashioning exercise" (Siu 2002:246). Bits and pieces of local history have been recycled to attract business and launch "Bai-ness."

7.2.2 Dali one-day-tour

This section, in describing a one-day tour of Dali, analyses the entanglement of places, practices, and images with the subjectivity of the local people. The one-day package tour is organised to encompass the cultural capital of the Bai, their social life, history, *benzhu* cults and Bai-style architecture.

The tour starts from a ferry that takes tourists across Erhai lake. On the ferry, Bai singing and dancing are performed in fancy costumes. There is also a re-enactment of a supposed wedding. A so-called 'Bai three-course tea' is served with explanations about its meaning and relevance to the daily life of the Bai. After the singing and dancing, passengers can have their photos taken with the dancers, mostly girls in Bai costume. The first stop is Nanzhao Feature Island, which will be discussed later. Then tourists are taken to a "traditional" Bai house with a white screen and courtyard. Tourists are served local tea. A girl in Bai costume performs tea-making while another serves them. After the tea-break, the tourists are taken to the Butterfly pond where the 1950s' feature movie was shot, and big posters with clips from the movie decorate the path (see Ills. 49, 71 & 72). Husbands and wives hire Bai costumes and have their photos taken there to commemorate their love, as the theme of the movie suggests. The next scenic stop is the Three Pagodas, which were first built around the mid 9th century. The final stop is the ancient town of Dali,

where clusters of shops sell 'ethnic products' as one will find at all other stops.

Domestic tourists generally commented that that they were coming to see the 'authentic' Bai; and overseas Chinese tourists, the 'real' China. The staged three-course tea and tea-making in a Bai house allows tourists to experience what is presented as Bai life. The products included in this day tour, which most tourists take, encourage tourists to search for examples of authentic Bai-ness and local history. Most domestic tourists have come to experience authentic cultural differences between Han Chinese and Bai, evident in the distinct language, religious practices and exotic way of life. The one-day package tour allows them to see, experience and taste a form of Bai culture, and reinforce their previous imaginations about Dali and the Bai.

At each stop, there are a variety of stalls and booths selling various local products. In the ancient town of Dali, street vendors often stopped me and other tourists to buy some of the Dali marble art and crafts because "it is our Bai product with local characteristics, an ideal souvenir to take home." Also claimed as traditional Bai products are tie-dye products ranging from tablecloths to fashionable clothes. Ethnicity sells, and ordinary people are responding actively to market pressures to make the best they can out of it.

Local businessmen are in a quest for "old" and "authentic" antiques to meet the demands of tourist consumption. Business agencies (representing rural collectors, urban businessmen, and international businessmen from France, the US, Thailand, Japan and Holland) as well as tourists, all come to Dali for what they see as 'authentic' and 'old' exotic antiques, which are not necessarily Bai. Now that they

have run out of stock, the local people have started to make things look old and no specific ethnic origins are obvious. The meaning/story that is subsequently attached to a given commodity therefore usually eclipses its true origin. Some people claim a Bai identity for themselves and their goods, while others adopt other *minzu* identities in response to market demands. The shops and collectors convey a strong message: some ethnicities are more enticing than others in the Bai marketplace.

The tourists' search for authenticity and exoticism encourages the locals to act ethnically and to present difference. Local people actively incorporate themselves into the tourist economy. Dealing with tourists, people tend to identify themselves and their products as Bai, or originating in Tibet, or simply claim that their commodity is of some particular ethnic origin in order to develop a good position in the market.[11] In some cases, locals actively exoticise themselves and differentiate themselves as ethnic others in the competition to achieve their own material ends, or "scarce resources" in Barth's terms (1969). Locals therefore adopt whatever may be marketable from neighbouring peoples such as the Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao and Han people rather than restricting themselves to original Bai traditions, to provide the tourist with his/her "tangible evidence of travel" (Graburn 1978).[12]

The encounter with tourism thus tends to enhance a sense of ethnicity and self-awareness among members of a *minzu*. Tourism actually offers, despite official images of Dali as overwhelmingly Bai, more space for a presumed traditional Bai

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[11] Nearby Bai villagers involve themselves in the tourist market because of a reduction in available arable land and decreasing yields from fishing. Commercial fishery was totally banned for environmental concerns in 1999.

[12] To foreigners, the most popular ethnic items in the numerous local antique shops are Miao embroideries and silverware, although little attention is paid to the origin of these goods.

culture to flourish and be transformed.

7.2.3 Nanzhao Feature Island

Nanzhao Feature Island (see Ills. 46-48) is a showcase built on an isolated island in Erhai lake that decontextualises and fragments elements of local culture to be reworked as 'a collection of signs' (Urry 1990:3) of the history of the Bai and an exotic Bai culture. The island receives many thousands of tourists each year, basically all organized by the Local Tourism Bureau.

There are four main sites of architecture on the island: Nanzhao Palace, Yunnan Mascot Square, *Benzhu* Cultural Square, and the Origin Myth Sculpture (see Ills. 47). The so-called Nanzhao Palace is claimed to have been rebuilt on the original site according to the tour guide, and is now a hotel, while Yunnan Mascot Square displays some historical stories in drawings and frescos on an encircling wall. The reason it is called Yunnan rather than Bai or Dali is, I assume, because historical stories about the beginning of, and prior to, the Nanzhao kingdom are all locally related with the Yi. It is not possible to claim it is Bai and there is an obvious reluctance to make it Yi. So Yunnan is employed as an all-embracing place identity. The politics of representation is played out here in that the same attractions may be presented in a different manner with different emphasis by different actors for different purposes and in different contexts. There is no opportunity (social space) for a fair or equal representation of the Yi in the architecture of Yunnan Mascot Square.

As figure 2 shows, meticulous planning can be seen in the *Benzhu* Cultural Square where there are nine *benzhu* sculptures. On the lower part of all these *benzhu*

statues, there is a short note about him/her, which does not really tell who, where or how this particular figure had become a Bai *benzhu*. Duan Zongbang is in the front central position (see Ill. 46), guarded by two other common monster *benzhu*: Mahakala and the Northern God (see figure 7.1). On each side of Duan there are four *benzhu* sculptures. There is no way to find out who made the choice in deciding which gods to choose and where they should be positioned. Tourists take the arrangement for granted. From the layout of these *benzhu* statues, Duan's position is centralised and salient.

Figure 2: Positions of all *benzhu* on *Benzhu* Cultural Square:

Duan Zongbang
段宗牓[13]

Northern God
北方天王

Mahakala
大黑天神

Zhangle Jinqiu
张乐进求

God of fortune
财神

Lady Bejie
柏节夫人[14]

Goddess phoenix
凤凰女神

Li Mi
李宓

Wang Lekuan
王乐宽

Zhen Hui
郑回

Kublai Khan
忽必烈

In Chapter Five, I discussed the importance of Duan in *benzhu* cults. Mahakala is one of the most popular monster *benzhu* in Bai communities (see Ill. 60). There are many stories about him saving lives and helping locals along Erhai Lake.[15]

[13] The Chinese characters for Duan's name can be various homophones.

[14] As discussed in Chapter Five (5.3.2), the Chinese characters for Lady Bejie can be various homophones, also including 白姐 and 白洁.

[15] According to Lien Juichih (2003: 284-289), Mahakala was first introduced to Dali during 712-728,

I was not able to discover who the Northern God is or where he comes from during my fieldwork in nearby villages. According to Yang Zhengye (1994: 199-219), both Northern God and Mahakala are Buddhist deities.

What is important here is the selection of these particular *benzhu* and their position in this particular square which displays Bai religious cults. According to traditional Chinese concepts of space, the most important position is stage left. And the first *benzhu* on stage left is the God of Fortune, who is a secondary god in almost all *benzhu* and non-*benzhu* temples according to the layout, but is placed in a very important position here first on stage left. I have never seen, read or heard of anything of the next statue, the Phoenix Goddess. The note about her image explains she loves to live in a nice environment with clear water, woody forest and quietness. She takes up responsibility for environmental protection. Next is Wang Lekuang, who is worshipped as a Bai general with his family as a triumphant general in the village where the island is administratively located (see Ill. 62). Compared with the position of these three *benzhu* on Duan's left side, Kublai Khan takes the least important position, which contrasts sharply to his position in *Zhongyang Ci* (see Chapter Five and Ill. 27).

On stage right, Zhangle Jingqiu, the legendary Bai king of *Bai Zi Guuo*, sits first. His legend is important since it is said that Zhangle Jingqiu, gave his throne to the first Nanzhao king who was from the Yi when Zhang saw signs. Lady Bejie, the next image, is discussed in Chapter Five. As discussed in that chapter, *benzhu* come

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and many *tuzhu* are Mahakala, although not all the temples housing the god are called *tuzhu* temples. Mahakala is often worshipped in other parts of Yunnan, either as main or secondary god in local patron god temples.

from different ethnic backgrounds and this is also revealed in the eight flanking *benzhu* in the square. Li Mi was a Han general who was sent by the Tang court in 751 AD (see Ill. 29).[16] Zhen He is from the Hui, a captive from the troop sent by the Tang court; Kublai Khan, a Mongolian (see Ill. 27).

During my fieldwork, I went to temples containing all these *benzhu* except Zhang and Zhen He, who were, nevertheless, well recorded in print. The positioning of these *benzhu* in *Benzhu* Cultural Square and the addition of one goddess illustrates how contemporary decision-makers are interpreting history in their preferred ways.

Another thing on Nanzhao Feature Island that is visualised and made salient is the origin myth. For the Bai, there is no one unifying origin myth, but a number related to the origin of part of the Bai (see Lian 2003) or different ethnic minorities in the same area. One of these stories was chosen and displayed near landing stage of the Nanzhao Feature Island, the statue of Mother Sayi (see Ill. 48) with a written introduction about her. According to the tour guide (recorded May 2005):

> Sayi is said to be a woman from Ailao Mountain (northwest of current Yunnan) who conceived by touching a piece of wood and gave birth to ten brothers. The Bai and the Yi were among these ten, and thus Sayi became the origin mother of these two ethnic groups.

From the *Benzhu* Square and Mother Sayi sculpture, it is hard to tell whether the Bai are creating a landscape/product more meaningful to them or to tourists (see Oakes 1998:71 for a similar case among the Miao). Maybe it is both. The tourist market not only provides a place where tourists seek authentic ethnicity, but more importantly, it provides a stage where Bai ethnic identity can be developed with the

[16] See Dong Jianzhong (1988) for more about the cult of Li Mi among the Bai.

blessing of the state and as a tool for the local people to negotiate with the central state for a better share of the market.[17] A tourist culture is emerging, but differences between authentic and touristic do not necessarily disappear as Oakes (2006:169) points out among the Miao. The one-day package tour demonstrates that Bai ethnicity in the Dali tourist market is much more varied and complex than it appears, or assumed by the tourist media.

7.3 Various representations

As seen from the above, the extent and kinds of display that locals choose to expose to tourists may vary. But the central theme is always the same: Dali is the origin place of the Bai with a long and glorious history. At the same time, this monolithic image of the Bai history of Dali may meet different interpretations. This section will demonstrate how both hosts and guests embrace multi-ethnic features in a Bai setting presumed to be homogeneous. People are exploiting anything that appears to be traditional and exotic. And the tourists may be attracted to non-Bai ethnic items that the Dali market produces. I will illustrate this with two marketplaces, *Shaping* Market, and Foreign Lane.

Shaping Market (see Ills. 50, 69 & 70) is one of the local Bai markets held every five days on an area of open ground where locals come under the direct gaze of Western tourists. Taking it as an authentic Bai market, Western tourists like to buy souvenirs there from Bai vendors who bring their stock all the way from their usual booths in the ancient town. This market is actually nothing more than a weekly

[17] This does not necessarily mean Bai ethnic identity is the only way people can represent themselves.

exchange market for food and necessities. Locals do not particularly bother to act, perform, or make the market look "authentically Bai" or Chinese, yet tourists think it is "authentic" because it is obviously not staged. One Western tourist exclaimed: "This is the *real* China!" The market does not appeal to domestic tourists at all. In their eyes, it is the same as any other rural market in China; there is no 'ethnic characteristic' to it at all.

But the tourist market also provides a space for a symbiosis of plural ethnicity as well as different interpretations and expectations of ethnicity. *Yangren Jie* (Foreign Lane) in the heart of Dali is a direct product of tourism development and its expression of ethnic varieties. Foreign Lane was once a small lane (about 200 metres in length and 8 metres in width) by the side of the Golden Flower Hotel, the first hotel in the ancient town of Dali, which used to be the only hotel authorised to house foreign guests. Before the state-run hotel was able to figure out how to cater for their overseas guests with cold drinks and coffee, nearby small restaurants and eating places quickly took advantage of the opportunity. The first café was opened in 1988 by a local artist. The foreign lane is now full of bars and cafés where no such thing existed before the 1980s. The name *Yangren Jie* is ambiguous in Chinese. It could be understood as a lane filled with foreign tourists or one inhabited/managed by foreigners. It has becoming a selling point in the Chinese tourist brochures too, since it presents a chance for domestic tourists to gaze at foreign tourists and consume a foreign atmosphere in their own country.

Yangren Jie is an ideal stage for the locals to display ethnicities and for the tourists to find what they can expect from this place and these people. The settings of

cafés and bars make overseas tourists feel at home while domestic tourists feel exotic. Owners and managers deliberately decorate their establishments with "authentic" ethnic characteristics: things suggesting a remote ethnic origin (mostly Tibetan), or exemplifying a mosaic of ethnic backgrounds with Buddhist scriptures, tokens, paintings, pictures and household antiques.

At the same time, a strong Western flavour is apparent: tables made in a Western style, Western music and leisure readings on the bookshelves, ice cubes[18] and Western cuisine; yet the internal details also express a strong local flavour. Bars and cafés offer Western food in a Chinese setting and create an atmosphere where East meets West; tradition fits in with modernity to meet demands from both domestic and overseas clients. Overseas tourists can find safe and clean food in a cosy and relaxing Eastern environment in a small southwest frontier town of China – old, rough, mysterious, and traditional.

Given the proportion of overseas Chinese tourists, who made up about 70% of total international arrivals in 1999, their interest in exotica may explain why a Tibetan identity (all the shrines) is preferred rather than that of any other local ethnic group. Domestic tourists (mostly from coastal and northeast China) are also keen on Tibetans and traditional Tibetan herbal medicine. Because of its geographic location, Dali has long been a trading place for Tibetans and for Tibetan herbal traders with their magical remedies (also see Fitzgerald 1941). Domestic tourists can thus experience what they assume to be a Western style of life, often perceived as leisurely and romantic, as well as the exotic ethnicities of the far Tibetan frontier.

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[18]Due to the cool weather condition, iced water is not a daily necessity and usually can not be found in homes and Chinese restaurants in this area.

The first café in Foreign Lane was a "Tibetan Café" that targeted foreign tourists. The owner saw to it that everything in it looked Tibetan: the colour, the paintings, and the copies of Buddhist scriptures on coloured flags. Other cafés with some Tibetan features can be found nearby. A typical one is a café owned by a Bai woman painter, but the altar in the room, the door curtain, and the paintings on the wall all suggest everything is connected with Tibet. The café relies more on her paintings than on the food and beverages. The clearly expressed Tibetan ethnicity does not have to be consistent with the owners' ethnic identity; what it does is to convey exotic meanings to tourists. This is quite unlike Shaping Market, where no effort is made to stage ethnicity or authenticity.

What is staged in this market is quite unlike the exclusive Bai identity promoted by the state and tourist developers. This contradiction becomes clear when comparing the 1930s market with the present one. The current market presents a multi-ethnic flavour rather than an exclusively Bai atmosphere. In 1938, 52.7% of the businesses on the main street were run by Min-chia and a small number of Tibetan traders who sold their yields from the mountains (Fitzgerald 1941:53-54). In 1999, most of the businesses on Foreign Lane were owned by locals in Dali (not necessarily Bai). Contemporary commodities are quite different; souvenir shops and marble shops comprise two-thirds of the establishments, and the remaining are cafés and restaurants. In 1938, there were 64 restaurants and tea houses (the Bai people are known in China for their traditional three-course tea) run by Bai people in Dali (*ibid*), but there is not a single Bai café today. All the shops are owned and managed by private entrepreneurs. In this sector, the state does not bother to regulate their

behaviour "except for coming to collect tax", as one informant said. The irony is that this small lane loses most of its local and Bai features once it becomes an important feature on the Dali Bai tourist market.

Compared with the previous section, which discussed the building of an exclusively Bai identity, this section shows that individuals have the opportunity and freedom to express who they are and what they choose to represent. This is not to say that they are what they stage/sell, but to point out that the tourism has nurtured a sense of being Bai, being ethnically distinctive, and simply acting out whatever ethnicity one chooses, to meet the tourists' "misplaced desire for authenticity" (Oakes 1998), and to ensure a bigger share of the market. Foreign guests become targets of the gaze of domestic tourists. The observer becomes the observed, precisely because of the overwhelming influence of the observer on the apparently observed.

Here it is worthwhile noting another case to illustrate how the politics of representation works among the Bai under the influence of tourism. In a suburb of Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan province, a Bai village (*Tuan Jie Xiang*) has become quite prosperous as a result of the recently developed "eco-tourism." In this village the theme advocated, *Nong Jia Le,* literally means "enjoying rural family life" with rural being the keyword. When tourists go to the village, they are accommodated in renovated or newly-built fancy double rooms in some well-to-do households, can enjoy fresh food from the fields, and can participate in the fruit-picking or home vegetable garden if they like.

Most of these tourists are city-dwellers who come and spend a weekend there,

killing time by playing Mahjong or cards. In the evening, various groups perform routine ethnic minority singing and dancing, some of the girls dressed in Bai costumes which look like clothes from Phoenix or Sword counties. Some of the repertoire is Yi.[19] The promotional strategy emphasises rural-ness rather than Bai-ness, while the evening singing and dancing represents a bit of everything. Unlike in Dali the Bai ethnic card is not played so prominently in this urban suburb. My point here is that ethnic identities are not always obvious and salient, even in the context of intercultural encounters (since these tourists are confronted with inter-culturally different peoples). In this case, it is not ethnicity which is commoditised so much as rural-ness.

This is not really to address the issues of changing ethnicity or ethnic identity among the Bai, but to point out that this is a changing socio-political environment. The same item can become a brand-name commodity in cultural or ethnic terms, in some situations but not in others. Ethnicity has becomes an object of consumption and conscious manipulation.

It must be pointed out here that such cultural showcases are not necessarily interpreted in the same way by the local Bai. On the one hand, ethnicity can be shaped in very practical and highly structured terms to cater for consumption needs; the market place and the tour are consciously organised as ethnically Bai. Yet, on the

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[19] Some Yi live in the same area in housing similar to that of the Bai, only smaller in layout according to the standards I documented in Dali. This is because these Yi, and some Bai, live near a mountain, so the steep topography made the luxurious layout of houses as in Dali valley impossible. These Yi people speak Bai, and they are not alone in Yunnan. In Weishan County, there is a village called *Luo Ma Chu*, meaning the 'village where one falls off the horse' where the Yi similarly speak Bai (Minjia) (Hu Tianzhuo 忽天倬 1986).

other hand, many successful business people and villagers reject the authenticity of such 'Bai' commodities. Unlike Emily Chao's (1996) Naxi informants, who were enthusiastic about the modern, colourful versions of the more traditional costumes, my Bai informants were quite critical. They criticised for example the so-called 'three-course tea,' claiming that it was not Bai tradition at all, it was just a very common and flexible regional practice. There was nothing really ethnically significant about having three different courses or particular ingredients. They alleged that all the meanings of this were invented. Another tourist establishment that they had strong opinions about is Nanzhao Feature Island, which they insisted was merely an isolated island. No one had ever heard before that it was the summer palace of the Nanzhao king; it was all made up.

7.4 Changing attitudes towards ethnicity

When China opened its doors to the outside world in the late 1970s and early 1980s, foreigners were understood to have a great deal of interest in ethnicity (see Blum 1994: 97). International tourists were at first limited in their direct contact with rural and ethnic people, because ethnicity was interpreted as "backwardness," which would bring shame to socialism. After tourism developed, however, this was no longer the case.

Ethnic identity has now acquired *economic* value. All the beneficiaries, the state, local community, and tourists, have their own stereotyped memories and interpretations of so-called "traditional Bai cultural traits". What is believed to be "traditional" and unique to the Bai has been reinvented. Cultural traditions have

become mere raw materials in the construction of ethnic identities, which are mediated by official terminology as well as by the effects of the tourist gaze. As illustrated above, the reality is not really exclusively Bai at all.

This has brought about a change in people's attitudes towards ethnicity. Throughout Chinese history, state discourses have formed a polarising paradigm of hierarchy and strongly advocated assimilationism. Ethnic groups were long regarded as 'savage', 'barbarian', and 'uncivilised' during the Imperial period. In the first Republic (1912-49), the Republican President Sun Yat-sen recognised the "Five Peoples of China" (*wuzu gonghe*). The socialist state (The People's Republic of China, 1949-present) adopted a social evolutionary theory based on Frederich Engels' elaboration of Lewis Henry Morgan's model; ethnic minority societies were regarded as 'backward' (*luohou*) in contrast to Han people's 'advanced' (*xianjinde*) culture.

The new development discourses often refer to *minzu* culture as 'conservative' (*baoshoude* in contrast to 'progressive/open'), which together with their 'simple' (*dancun*) as opposed to sophisticated social organization and economic life are the causes of 'poverty' and 'underdevelopment'. The development of tourism, however, has changed this situation. Discourses of hierarchy have been replaced by discourses of authenticity, which removes ethnicity from a progress-versus-backwardness continuum and its negative evaluations (White 1998); "authentic" cultural traits and practices have become highly valued. Ethnic background and ethnic cultures no longer necessarily make people feel ashamed or disadvantaged; they are something people often feel proud of and are willing to reveal.

Some studies of the impact of tourism on indigenous communities have the underlying assumption that cultural changes are leading to a gradual homogenisation of cultures in which the local identity must be assimilated into the stronger visiting culture. Yet this is not the case in Dali (see also Mackerras 1988). The Western culture introduced by tourism and the Tibetan culture which has long been a feature of the area have not assimilated the Bai, and will not. In their own way, people are enriching their cultural stage by displaying what is totally alien to their tradition. The people in Dali are pursuing, as they have always been, alternatives to express their identity. As Blum (2001:171) puts it: "they have long embraced assimilation while retaining just enough evident features to identity them as ethnically other" in changing political and socio-economic contexts.

Tourism has offered local actors a certain degree of control over their identification. People are happy to identify with the Bai label while renovating other cultural traits and staging what is profitable. For people in Dali, ethnic identity is a good tool with which to make a profit from the outside world. They are demarcating their ethnic identity with the state label on the one hand; on the other, they make sure that shifts of identity are possible when necessary.

The Dali tourist market challenges the assumption that many Chinese people tend to choose an ethnic identity merely to ensure privileges from the state, the market also is important. The flexibility of ethnicity is not only due to state imperatives and perceived advantages, but also to the demands of the market. The question in Dali now is *which* ethnic identity to present, rather than whether to choose a Bai or Han Chinese status. This phenomenon requires a more flexible and

forward-looking attitude towards culture and a new sense of ethnic identity. The tourist industry has opened up to the locals the possibilities of sustaining ethnic identity while adopting a wide range of non-Bai cultural traits. Local people have realised the importance of both a clearly demarcated Bai label and blurring boundaries.

7.5 Conclusion

The effects of tourism extend far beyond the immediate interactions between locals and tourists. Tourism becomes relevant to Bai identity in a sense that it strengthens their sense of being ethnically different and their making use of the state-defined Baizu label in the production of a tourist sphere.

As a response to the demands of the tourist industry, staged ethnicity has led towards the (re)-construction of cultural tradition and has made people more self-conscious and reflexive about the 'cultural stuff' that they may have previously taken for granted, or may be left unattended. The Bai know the Nanzhao Feature Island is a merely construction for economic purposes; they think the push about three-course teas being "Bai" is a joke; they are happy to sell Tibetan and Yi products to tourists; the tourists go to a street of Western cafés decorated as Tibetan. Such a touristic ethnicity is not necessarily a "debasement and ultimately the destruction of ethnic culture itself" (Wood 1998:227). It contributes to the sense of ethnicity on the part of the local people and tourists. And there is no reason to assume an 'authentic' ethnic culture was out there in the beginning before tourism.

The tourist trade has itself been appropriated by a Bai cultural discourse of

identity and meaning. Tourism has become central to the Bai in the ancient town of Dali. It is now part of their culture and part of their ethnic identity. Many Bai traditions, though hardly identifiable as such by locals, have been shaped by the market. But it does not matter as long as a clear Bai identity is anchored there. This is a situation in which the production of ethnic culture and identity becomes necessary and achievable through staging and commodifying a presumed continuity of local culture and history, which itself has demonstrated historical flexibility. In identifying with bits of multicultural traditions, locals are exploiting the rigid official category and challenging the idea of an unchanging homogeneous Bai Identity. They are actually influencing Bai-ness even though non-Bai cultural contents are common, which I would interpret as people's subjectivity in manoeuvring for a secure economic environment as well as their anxieties and uncertainties about ethnic identity.

Currently, ethnic identities are intertwined with the building of a regional and national development ideology; a mixture of cultural traits are readily observed and identified with by people for reasons and motivations beyond any single concern of a primordial or instrumentalist approach. Bai identity has been reconstructed without a close check on historical accuracy, or close adherence to the line set by the state. The state, entrepreneurs, local government, local community, as well as tourists have all had their share in bringing into reality a compound construct that all parties can identity with as Bai.

At the beginning when the official Baizu label was granted, the Bai people were experiencing what Bentley calls a crisis of ethnic identity (Bentley 1987:43)

The official *Baizu* category helps them pin down their ethnic identity and overcome the crisis. Tourist market helps them to gain more confidence in identifying with the Baizu label. The economic activities of individuals in the tourist industry[20] have become more like a daily reminder of ethnicity. This new formation of ethnic identity is an effective way to adjust from a planned economy to a market economy. Tourism provides a platform where we can see how contrived ethnic identity is manipulated to varying extents and made meaningful for the sake of perceived benefits.

The engagement of the Bai in tourism also shows us that interpretations of identity require a dialogical understanding of motivations and interests of different actors in a given political-economic setting. The "new reconstitutions of tradition" (Siu 1989: 122, 300) do not entail, as Siu insightfully concludes and Anagnost (1994) reiterates, the same perceptions as in the past. Such revivals express a strong motivation to manipulate the tourist market. People are both agents and victims, who are accomplices in a process of change (see Siu 1989:301). Claims of authenticity allow locals to manoeuvre for their own sake.

A separation of the "tourist sphere" and everyday life is obvious in the social behaviour and ideas of local people, so it may not necessarily be mitigated and eventually vanish as in some cases in Southeast Asian countries, as E. Cohen predicts (2001). Although some touristic ethnicity has been absorbed into the culture and social life of the Bai, the difference between 'authentic' and 'touristic' has not necessarily disappeared here since the Bai seem fully aware of the two different spheres and are happy to swim in both.

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[20]When studying overseas Chinese, Wang Gungwu (1991:205) calls on scholars to link economic activities with questions of Chinese identity.

Chapter Eight

Becoming Ethnically Different

Ill. 51: The Tower of Five Glories. Ancient Town of Dali. 2004.

Ill.52: Screen Wall. Deng Village. 2004.

Ill.53: Newly built Bai house. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill.54: Fancy Bai shop outside Three Pagodas Park. 2005

Chapter Eight

Becoming Ethnically Distinctive

Starting from the external impacts, but focusing on the internal workings of Bai society, this thesis has examined "the role of various social actors who develop and deploy narratives to redefine the boundaries and identities of a collectivity with multiple identifications" (Duara 1995:66). The thesis has demonstrated how people use the state-granted label to re-conceptualise Bai identities through historical studies, recent memories, religious practices, and an annual social event. Differences are claimed and taken for granted in formulating the Bai as a distinctive group in society. The Bai have moved from an ethnic category to become an ethnic group emotionally, practically and politically. All these findings contribute toward a better understanding of social changes in a Chinese context. They also illustrate some of the historical and social interactions in which *minzu* identities, the Bai in this case, are produced.

This chapter will concentrate on two issues that have been examined through all the chapters. What do the Bai identify with and where should one locate Bai Identity? Then I will discuss my other findings, and end with a brief discussion of future directions in Chinese *minzu* studies.

8.1 What do the Bai identity with?

As elaborated at the beginning of the thesis, I initially approached my study

of the Bai with the assumption of a completely different Bai culture with strong boundaries between themselves and neighbouring people. Yet my experience overturned this assumption. I did not find many different cultural traits, but encountered people both within and outside of the Bai category who were sensitive to ethnic boundaries and cared deeply about a separate Bai Identity.

This thesis has tried to demonstrate that Bai identity, both as an official label and as a form of self-identification, is a positive response to social changes which have diffused the way of life of the Bai people. They are more than an officially-granted ethnic group. Bai identities are products of combined political, 'scientific' and lay classifications (Williams 1989:402). The recognition by the state and the active reproduction of the granted label have all contributed to the vitality of Bai Identity. Even claims about their origins as Han does not hinder people from socially identifying with the Bai as long as their identification is socially and economically beneficial to themselves and acceptable by the state. Following Sahlins, this thesis argues that "People act upon circumstances according to their own cultural presuppositions, the socially given categories of persons and things" (Sahlins 1981:67). As a result, Bai identities can be partial, contradictory, and strategic as with identities elsewhere.

As discussed in this thesis, it is difficult to distinguish the Bai from the Han by any clear-cut features except for the Bai's own claims about religious practices under the *benzhu* label (Chapter Five), and socially constituted differences between the 'authentic' Bai and *jiaguobe* (Chapter Four). They strongly identify with the Bai term in its own right. This does not mean that the Bai are a product of a "mere act of

imagining" (Bath 1994:13). Rather, this thesis has tried to illustrate that the Bai category has become a social reality and a shared categorisation system enacted through collective representations (Durkheim 1961), social memories, religious practices, social events and the tourist encounter. Thus it does not really matter even if "the Bai villagers did not appear to be different in physical features, appearance, behaviour, or custom from other ethnic [Han] Chinese villagers in the region" (D. Wu 1994:158).

My informants and scholars who are Bai have repeatedly emphasised that Bai identities were shaped by a Bai culture which is characterised by its open structure (*jian shou bing xu*), as discussed by Ma Yao (see Chapter Five 5.6) and emphasised and reiterated by other Bai intellectuals (e. g. Li Zuanxu 1984, 1991; Zhan Chengxu 1982, Shi Zhongli 2002). *Jian shou bing xu* means hybridity, taking in and absorbing. The Bai religious practices and the annual festival discussed in Chapters Five and Six illustrate how the Bai selectively appropriate deities from different backgrounds, rework and incorporate them into the Bai category. We can see that the so-called Bai culture is everything and nothing at the same time. This thesis draws attention not to the cultural features but to the Bai category as a nominal entity, which does not have an essence, but locates itself in a chain of "differing and deferring." The Bai label becomes alive through people's identifications rather than through a set of prescribed cultural features. In addition, although both Bai origins and religious practices encompass heterogeneity, there is still something distinctive about them, which is reinforced in the strong identification of these people as Bai and their strong sense of collectivity.

Bai identity has also emerged as a result of the struggle for alternative forms of authority, which is crucial in scholarly (Chapter Three), political (Chapters One and Two) and religious (Chapter Five) domains. The notion of "interest group" (A. Cohen 1974a) can be an effective concept to understand the Bai since it goes beyond the ideological basis of ethnicity (also see Williams' critique of A. Cohen 1989:409).

In Chapters Five and Six, I have shown that sentimental and habitual affiliations are also explicitly present in the ethnic identification among ordinary Bai. The meanings of certain deities or "imposed symbolisms" (Certeau 1984) do not need to be known to everyone; it is that sense of belonging to the Bai category that matters. In addition, some people do not always know "what they do does" (Foucault in Bentley 1987:48) in their religious practices. Bai people are neither programmed by 'cultural rules' (Abu-Lughod 1993:27), nor highly effective agents who bend circumstances to their will. Their agency has to be understood in a more complex and located way.

8.2 Where to locate Bai Identity?

Bai identity is a potent subjectivity synthesised in social-historical layerings of relationships between the state (as shown in Chapters One, Two, Six and Seven), the Han (Chapters Three and Four) and the Yi (Chapters Three and Five). This thesis argues that it is in a "third space" (Bhabha 1994) between these relationships that Bai ethnicity and identities are produced and reproduced.

Most theorists now conclude that ethnicity is determined by two main aspects:

culturally defined notions of descent, socio-political circumstances (Keyes 1981:28, Gladney 2004:158), and self consciousness (A. P. Cohen 1994a&b). Seeing the state as an actor, we need to note the importance of a legitimate designation in China. Problematic though it may be, the National Ethnic Classification Project (NECP) granted the Bai official recognition and legal status, but it is not intended here to suggest this was "a one-way process" (Crossley et. al 2006b:4). While the NECP established a 'legitimate' Bai label, the process of identification did not end there. It would be reductionist to subjugate *minzu* identity to state power and the colonisation of people's self-concepts alone. The NECP did not define the precise cultural contents of each *minzu*. The people were left free, to a certain extent, to construct and conceptualise their own version of being ethnically distinctive. The Bai category is an important label to back up claim-making and to make a unique Bai ethnicity visible. The state's presence is ubiquitous, but its relationship with the Bai is interdependent with local agency, as shown in Chapters Five and Seven.

The Bai people's historical and current relationships with the state also indicate that the politics of domination and internal colonisation lose much of their significance in determining local identities. It is unlikely that the Bai category has ever been a form of outright "romanticised" resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990:41); it is a symbolic and symbiotic relationship rather than an opposition.[1]

As shown in Chapter Four, in addition to the relationship with the state, Bai identity is also located in the relationship with the Han. Ethnic identity is hierarchical,

[1] This is also true with other ethnic minorities in China such as the Miao and Yao, who have traditionally held Han Chinese culture, literacy, and wealth in high esteem and have sought to achieve a similar status to that of the Han (also see Tapp 1995).

but this does not mean that variant forms of ethnicity are always lower or an under-class, as Hacker (1951) and Honig (1992)[2] maintain with women and Subei people respectively.

Being Hanised is another aspect of Bai identity. Instead of being experienced as an instance of being overpowered by the Han, it is often referred to as a positive feature of Bai culture. The impact of the Han is seen as positive in forging a Bai Identity. Chapters Three, Four and Five show how the Bai enjoy a sense of superiority partly due to Hanisation. Being Bai means they are more 'civilised' even in comparison to their Han neighbours, and more 'advanced' than other ethnic minorities. At the same time, in shaping their sense of self-identity, the Bai have overstated the dichotomised differences between Han and Bai in Bai studies, social memories and religious practices.

In short, Bai identity is created out of cultural characteristics which are not so different from the Han culture. There is a lot of mediation and ambiguity between the identities of Han and Bai. So there is no essentialised feature or cultural boundary to maintain, except for a strong belief in being ethnically different. Thus similar religious practices, when represented under the Bai label as *benzhu*, became Bai practices.

Thus, have the Bai 'become' Han as many peoples in South China (see Liu & Faure 1996) have in the last fifteen hundred years? My answer is no. Bai intellectuals reject the notion that their identity is one of the "local versions" (Freedman 1974) of Han culture as exhibited in the Ph.D oral exam in the beginning of this thesis. Even

[2]Helen Mayer Hacker maintains women are a minority group like racial groups, which may apply in an American context but is not necessarily true in a Chinese one.

without the legitimate label, the Bai never lost their sense of being ethnically different. The 'loss' of Bai written language, intermarriage, Han immigration, and state-promoted standardisation of religious practices have not really done much to change the Bai into Han in their subjectivity. Moreover, all the recent difference-making discussed in this thesis shows that they will not become Han given the current availability and advantages of a legitimated Bai label.

8.3 Major findings and theoretical implications

Many people base their affiliations to the Bai on a mixture of the state category on the one hand and legends, history, religious practices or whatever is called 'tradition' on the other. The latter does not need to be expressed in precise or absolute terms; on the contrary, it is usually a flexible affiliation and one capable of being gradually transformed on the basis of the legal and consensual label. Divergent ways of being can be totalised into the Bai label.

Recent theoretical attempts, such as the interstitial approach (Bhabha 1994), dislocation approach (Gladney 2004), and social experience theory (Brown 2004:208, 210),[3] all successfully transcend the binary dichotomy between the state and society, but do not really help us explain why some people identify with one category (e.g.

[3] Brown (2004:208,210) emphasises that ethnic identities derive from different social experiences. She might be right in the sense that the NECP influenced the local social experiences of differently labelled *minzu* groups. However, I maintain that notions of being Bai are made of a number of daily practices rather than social experiences because the social experience of the Bai in recent history is not radically different from other people in Dali.

Bai) rather than other categories (e.g. Yi, Lisu or Naxi).[4]

A significant finding is the role of the legitimate name/term *Baizu*. The legitimate Bai label sets the basis for the sustainable reproduction of Bai identities. And this legitimated label is politically correct, economically valuable, socially and historically embedded in local social life, and fits well into a Chinese context. The term Bai offers a symbolic entity which allows people to feel the existence of a proper order while also ensuring some space for manipulation.

The Bai label is significant in that it makes the Bai feel different when the issue of 'performative contradiction' (Fabians 1991:263) emerges. This thesis has examined a number of terms that arouse questions in relation to the legitimacy of the *minzu* category (Chapter Two), the 'authentic' and the less 'authentic' Bai (Chapter Four), *benzhu* as opposed to *tuzhu* (Chapter Five) and the meaning of the name for the social event *gua sa na* discussed in Chapter Six. The 'legitimate' label has established the right to claim and to act out expressions of Bai identity. The official Bai label resolves all contradictions. As elaborated in Chapter Five, in the absence of a legitimate label prior to the NECP, the predecessors of the Bai could not really distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups by simply adopting "*benzhu*" rather than "*tuzhu*" to refer to their religious practices.

The NECP did half of the job in making the Bai while the other half lies in the negotiations of the people who never leave their ethnic label unattended. A "difference deferred" (Seigel 2006: 637) of *minzu* happened at the conceptual level, neither simply active nor simply passive (Derrida 1982[1972]: 9). The legitimate

[4] Other new theories are not making any progress except for using some new terms defined by the author to describe what has been elaborated in different terms.

label implies the symbolism of a separate language[5] which has created a world of difference.

My research subjects, be they elite or ordinary Bai, 'real' Bai or the *jiaguobe*, have all used various symbols to express their identities under the legitimate label. Yet unlike the Baba in Malaysia (Tan 1983), this is not really an act of attaching to cultural attributes, but an act of subjective identification.

Bai identities have been built on some assumed cultural features which are not necessarily ethnically distinctive but have become so due to the label. The official label itself is one of the means whereby they can distinguish themselves from the Han and other ethnic groups, even where that means using the current label to interpret history.

This thesis concludes that Bai Identity is a new form of group affiliation, new in the sense that group prestige has been gained from a refabricated past and hoped-for new instrumental economic or political gains.[6] It is a new identity, but not a new group. The Bai have entered the new world of a clear-cut *Baizu* category, but it is not completely unfamiliar to them. This legitimate category has enabled the Bai to see themselves in certain ways and facilitate interpretations that could frame a Bai culture. Bai identity has proved to be a manageable social and political unit for the expression of personal and collective efforts. In this sense, I conclude that *minzu* is a "new ethnic group definition" (De Vos 1995:13). The legitimated *minzu* labels, Bai in this case, have brought new social meanings to the Bai and the general Chinese

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[5] See Harrell (1995c) for his discussion of three kinds of languages used to speak or write about ethnicity and ethnic groups.

[6] See De Vos (1995) for a theoretical analysis.

population.

As demonstrated in the thesis, although in some senses there is one monolithic and homogeneous Bai Identity, there are also a number of identities manifested in different arenas. As shown in Chapter Six, Bai participants in *gua sa na* did not realise or simply ignored many non-Bai elements in the festival such as the singing of Yunnan opera, the dancing of popular repertoires and the worship of variegated deities. To many local Bai participants, these were all part of what they came for, and part of who they are.

Here I would draw particular attention to the importance of regional and native-place identity because native-place identity can be confused with ethnic identity in some of the literature (e.g. Honig 1989, 1992). The Chinese notions of regional identity have a lot to do with the common enduring linguistic complexity (see Blum 1994:126-181). Although this is also the case with Bai identity to a great extent, we still need to avoid the confusion of the two since language can often be a device for dialogue rather than a real identity criterion as exemplified in Chapter Four. In addition, regional (Dali) identity is a not a good measure of Bai-ness because Dali is also inhabited by the Han and other ethnic minorities.[7]

This thesis argues that conventional meanings attached to the concept of ethnicity are awkward to use to define the Chinese *minzu*, the Bai in this case. At the same time, it is also misleading to reduce social status and class to ethnicity because being ethnic does not necessarily entail inferiority and low-class as shown in Bai

[7] See Table 3. (p.56). See also Keyes 1974:208 for his differentiation between ethnic groups from locality group. Gladney (2004:166) notes that ethnic identity connects only with native place identity for the purpose of distinguishing each other among people from the same group. To the us-group, people refer themselves as Tarim Basin, to outsiders they call themselves Uyghur.

studies (Chapter Three), memories (Chapter Four) and religious practices (Chapter Five). I do not agree with Honig's (1989, 1992) conclusion that the native-place origin of Subei people is socially constructed as an ethnic identity largely on the basis that Subei identity is inferior.[8] Moreover, it is unlikely that the Subei or the Shanghainese would accept such a conclusion/analogue.

As I showed in Chapters One and Two, state categorisation is both an arbitrary state project and an opportunity. In the case of the Bai, state-defined *minzu* identity and degrees of Bai-ness co-exist. We may also need to rethink what we mean by giving voice to the subalterns. Subalterns do talk, as exemplified in Chapter Three, but they are not always heard by researchers.

The Bai elite, as shown in Chapter Three, have demonstrated their reverse self-other dichotomy: the Bai Self and the Han, Yi, or Naxi Other. The relationship between self and other is always relational. The Bai can be 'the self' as well as 'the other,' depending on how they are positioned and are positioning. Moreover, the 'Other' of the Bai is not necessarily always the same; sometimes the 'Other' is other mountainous peoples within the group, and sometimes the 'Other' is the Han majority.

Since "critical scholarship is still produced largely from outside China" (Gladney 2004: xiv), this thesis started by trying to dismantle the limitations of some anthropological concepts such as ethnicity and Sinicisation. In Chapter Two I undertook to disentangle the paradoxical relationship between ethnic group and *minzu*. Prior to the 1950s, many of the predecessors of the Bai belonged to different ethnic groups. After the 1950s, these people were labelled as the Bai and are discussed as a *de facto* ethnic group in the literature. I conclude that Bai Identity is

[8] Also see Myron L. Cohen (1994) regarding origin-place identity in China.

constructed on the basis of making difference rather than on difference itself, making difference out of identity rather than constituting one's identity out of difference.

8.4 Concluding remarks

As noted in Chapter Two, some scholars find it difficult to accept "China's version of classification of humans" (Blum 2002).[9] This thesis has presented an alternative to a hegemonic and unilateral view of Chinese *minzu* studies. As a social group, no one can deny or ignore the existence of the Bai. In this regard, Stevan Harrell (2001c) is correct when he points out that it is not important to argue whether a *minzu* is an ethnic group or not. It is more important to deconstruct how the Bai have become an undeniable identity, even if one that can be contested.

The people in southwest China have long been aware of ethnic distinctions (Unger 1997). Blum (1994:335) points out that in China "the language of identity tries to use the language of difference to strengthen itself. Can it succeed?" It does so at this stage with the Bai. State ideology, state language and new practices derived from an assumed commonly shared tradition have been reproduced to facilitate new identities. As Jonathan Unger (1997:77) notes, there are two cross-cutting trends at work: ethnic groups from southwest China have a reason to identify themselves as distinctive; on the other hand, they have increasingly taken on the attributes of local

[9] In addition, "Western scholarship on Chinese society until the 1980s had been conducted in regions under Western colonial and post-colonial influence or domination" (Gladney 2004: xv). Whether it is appropriate or not, "critical scholarship is still produced largely from outside China" (Gladney 2004: xiv).

Han culture. These two general tendencies ensure increased assimilation on the part of the minorities *and* increasing autonomy (also see Blum 1994:18).

Methodologically, an open research process, dialectical interaction and historical awareness do not necessarily ensure proper representation of any particular ethnic minority group. We have got to let people articulate who they are. In this regard, ethnography is still of special significance. Future studies of Chinese *minzu* will continue to be based on comparative studies from a more fundamental perspective in the domains of theory and methodology instead of merely at a cultural-phenomenal level and representation politics. *Minzu* studies no longer need to simply defend themselves against interrogations from anthropology, but to respond to social changes and theoretical inquiries in an intellectual way.

In a word, different degrees of the Bai may speak different languages/dialects, sing different tunes, dress differently, worship different *benzhu* in different villages and celebrate different occasions at different times of the year. But they all identify with the state Bai category. Confusions and ambiguity are common and have created instability and incompletion, which brings them more autonomy. All they want is to be discernible and to be a "less Other" (Abu-Lughod 1991).

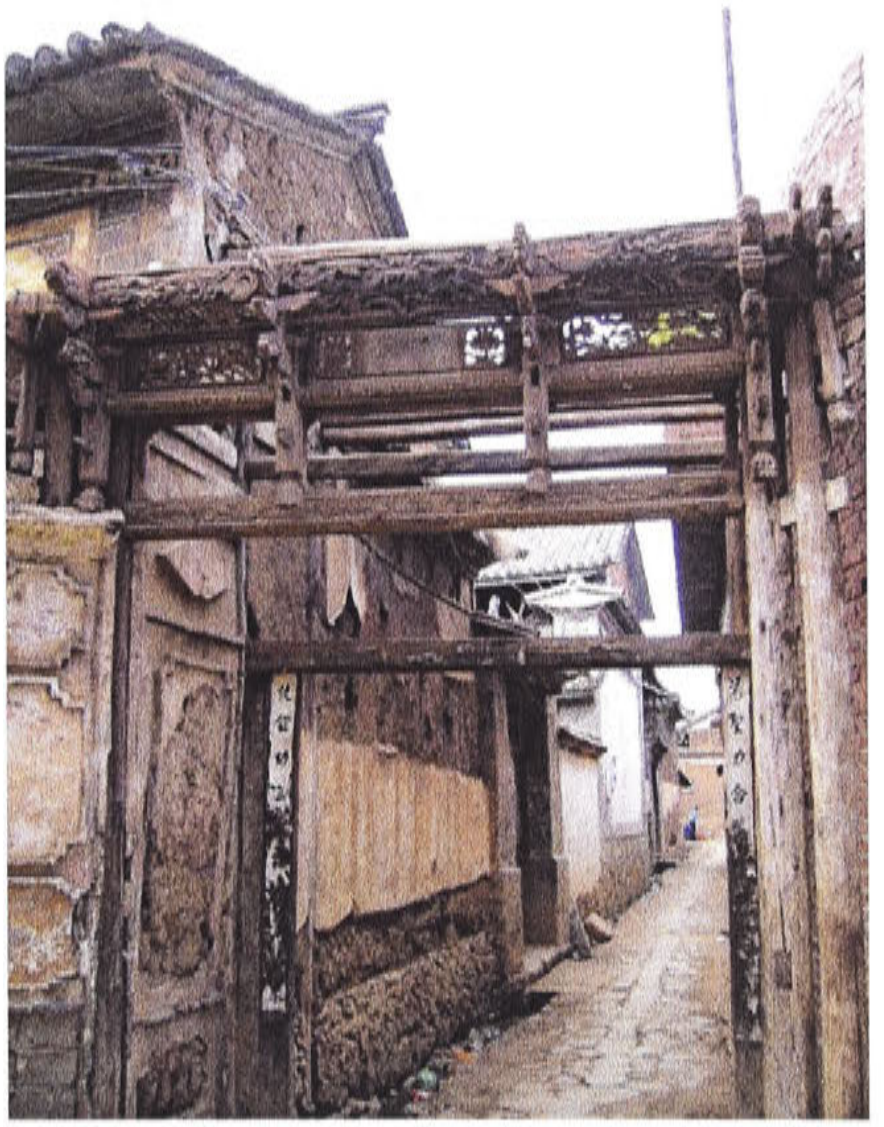
Appendix 1
Illustrations on the social life of the Bai (Ills. 55-71)

Ill. 55: Zhou Township Tie-Dye Factory. 2001

Ill. 56: Yi women selling her gatherings from the mountain in Dali. 2004.

Ill. 57: *Tuzhu* temple in Mega County. The temple of the Nanzhao founder. 2004.

Ill. 58: Burnt fancy gate. Light Village. 2004.



Ill. 59: Newly built replica in Mega county. 2005.

Ill. 60:
Mahakala as a main *benzhu* in Zhou Village. 2004.

Ill. 61: *Zhongyang Ci.* West Town. 2004.

Ill. 62: Wang Le Kuan and his family in Bay Village. 2005.

Ill. 63: Dressed up for a *benzhu a* procession. Colour Village. 2004.

Ill. 64: Part of a pilgrimage. Outside *Zongyang Ci*. 2005.

Ill. 65: Returning from a pilgrimage. 2001

Ill. 66: A side praying hall with Mao and Penchang's images. Mega County. 2004.

Ill. 67: Part of a pilgrimage: Making offerings even after the temple was closed. Colour village. 2004.

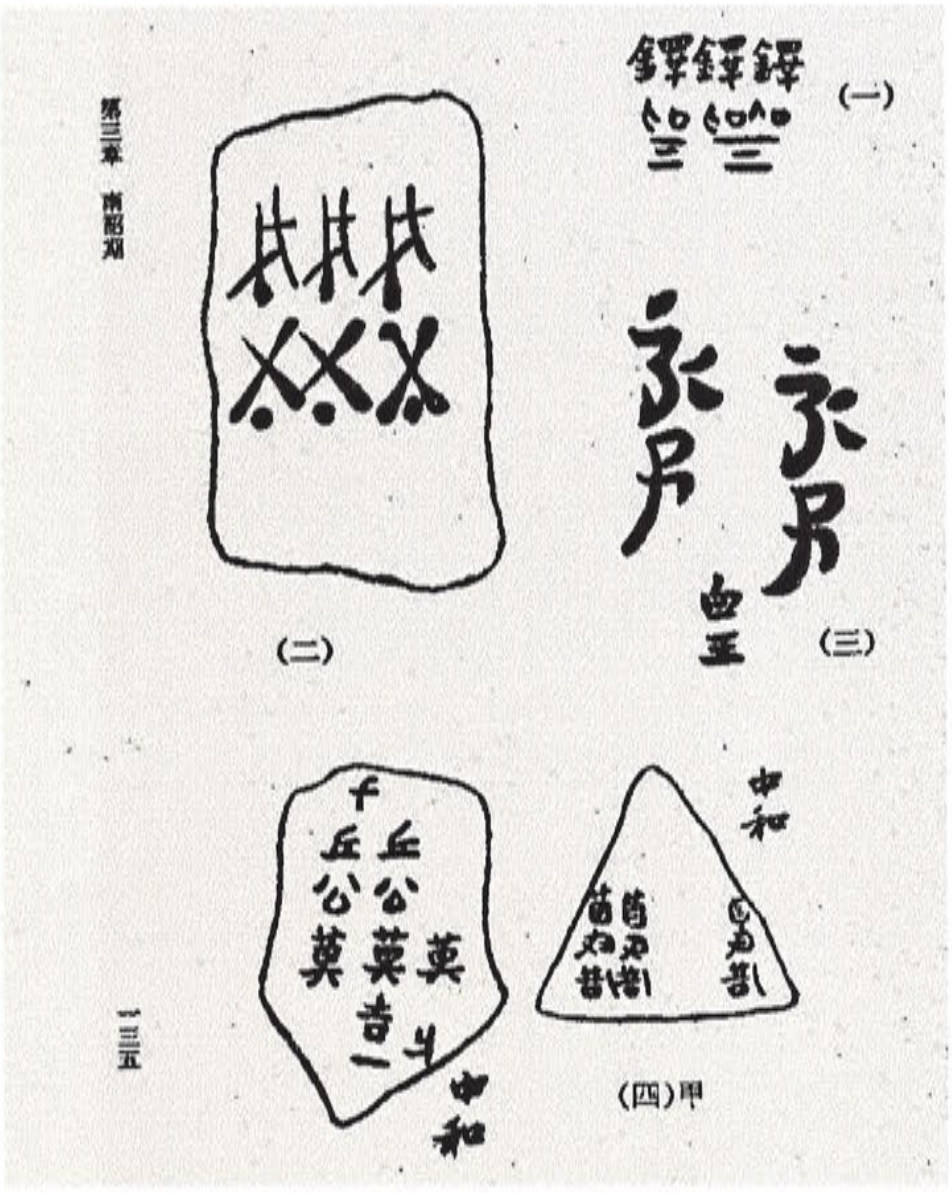
Ill. 68: Burning paper money at *gua sa na*. Cave Village. 2005.

Ill. 69. *Shaping* market. 2001

Ill. 70: *Shaping* market. Peddlers lining up to seek business with a foreign tourist. 2001.

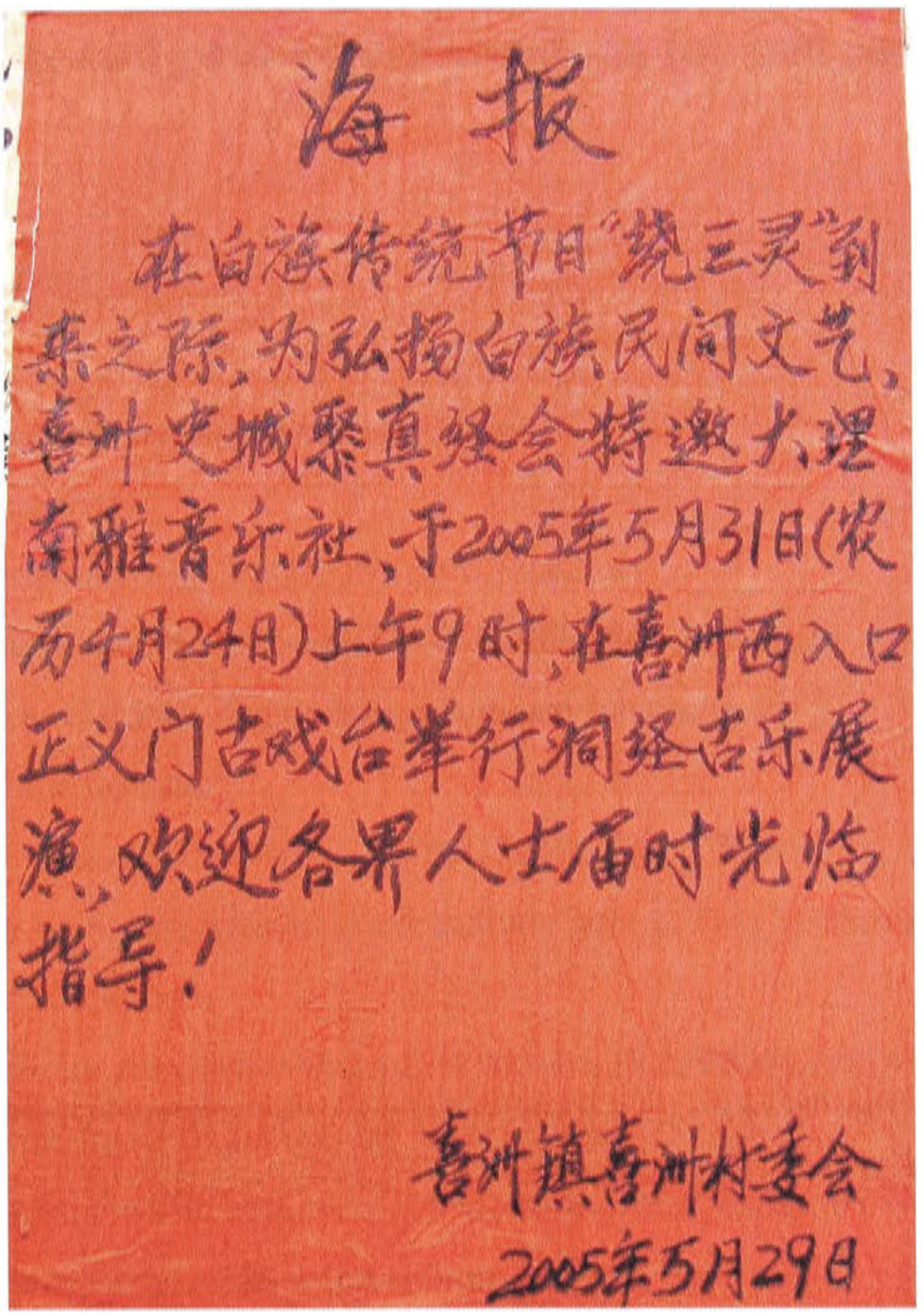
Ill. 71: One-day tour package. Tourists putting on costume to post a photo in front of clip from *Five Golden Flowers*. Butterfly Pond. 2005.

Appendix 2: Bai characters on unearthed tiles



Source: (Xu Jiarui 1979 [1945]:135).

Appendix 3: Poster for *gua sa na*. West Town. 2005.



Translation:

Gua sa na, the traditional festival of the Bai, is coming soon. In order to promote Bai art forms, Jizhengjing Association of West Town invites Dali Gaoyao Music Troup to perform traditional Dongjing music. Time: 9am May 31 2005 (24th of the 4th lunar month). Venue: Ancient Stage, west gate of West Town. Everyone is welcome.

West Town Community Committee.

May 29th 2005.

Appendix 4:

Web sources and printed publications for gua sa na stories.

Web sources

http://www.nhyz.org/yxx/mfmz/mz/mz_3.htm

http://life.sina.com.cn

http://www.gog.com.cn/jqpd/pd02001/ca251918.htm

http://www.linlins.com/NewMoon/4/2002-07-09-08-17-10.html

http://www.3ttravel.com/hotsightcity.asp?countryid=1&cityid=6

http://www.ewline.com.cn/

http://dance.jnu.edu.cn/LESSONS1/CHAPTER06/CHAPTER06_02.htm#03

http://www.cng.com.cn/allarticle/article/culture/2005527141224.html

http://www.travel.tom.com

http://www.chilicity.com/publishhtml/22/2005-04-25/20050425021436.html

http://www.yunnantourism.gov.cn/cgi_bin/bigate.cgi/b/g/g/

http://www.yunnantourism.com.cn/minorities/minorities_index.asp?

http://www.yunnan-tour.cn/dali/renwen.htm

http://www.yndl.gov.cn/gk/minzu.htm

http://www.yunnan.cn/166/

http://www.yn.xinhua.org/ynnews/zt/2002/wudao/minwu/bai4.htm

http://www.dali.gov.cn/DefaultStyle/DefaultStyle_NewPage.aspx?

http://www.daliok.com/web/bzjr/2003-10/1066394912.html

http://www.dalitour.gov.cn/gs-jr-raosaling.htm

http://www.yndali.gov.cn/zsyz/xm/2002/8.htm

http://www.mac.gov.tw/big5/rpir/2nd9_7.htm

http://www.dali163.com/culture/

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Zongguo Jiaoyu Bao. 2000-6-27

Yunnan Daily. 2001-7-19

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Zhao Ruiming. 2003. Baizu kuanghuan jie 'rao shan ling' 44-45 in *Jinri Minzu*. Issue 7.

Yang Yanjun et. al. 2005. *Dali Baizu Raoshanlin*. Kunming: Yunnan People's Press.

Appendix 5:

Gua sa na Income in Sunshine village temple, 2005.

Statues^	22nd*	23rd*	24th*	**Sub-total**
Benzhu	116	2,850	960	3,926
Benzhu s	71.80	2,049	319.60	2,440.50
Benzhu n	35.50	1,570.80	215.20	1,821.30
Jialan	21	452	110.90	593.90
Son-giving	75	540	171	786
Cattle	14	270	90	374
Pig	10	194	65	296
Fortune-god	103	1,550	438	2,091
State mother	26	450	168.8	644.80
Fuma	11.4	144	63	218.4
Incense-Burner		160	33	193
Red cloth		1,169	96	1,260
Guanyinshi#				752
Total	**483.70**	**11,398.90**	**2,75.30**	**15,361.90**

Source: fieldwork data in 2005. All money in RMB *yuan* (1 AUD = 6 *yuan*).
^ Contributions in front of all statues in the temple respectively.
* Dates in the fourth month of 2005 according to the lunar calendar.
# Collective contribution from Guanyin temple.

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